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MADELEINE'S TRIAL,

AND OTHER STORIES.

"MADELEINE'S TEA-PARTY."
M. Gerard brings home a present.—*Page* 5.

London:
HODDER AND STOUGHTON,
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MDCCCLXX.

MADELEINE'S TRIAL,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

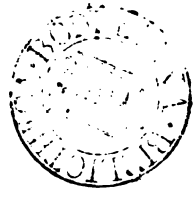
BY

MADAME PRESSENSÉ.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY ANNIE HARWOOD,

Translator of Dr. Pressensé's Works.



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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

It is perhaps due to my readers to say, that the book now presented to them, "Madeleine's Trial, and other Stories," is called in the French "Scènes d'Enfance et de Jeunesse." I have allowed myself the same freedom in changing the names of some of the separate stories, and have further, in a few instances, slightly altered them in detail. This I have only done, however, when a literal rendering would have failed to fulfil the author's intention and convey her true meaning. My aim has been to interpret faithfully, rather than to translate word for word.

ANNIE HARWOOD.

Great Shelford,
September 10th, 1870.

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Madeleine's Trial and Esther's Triumph.

IT was the end of a dark January day. A thick fog hung over Paris. The people ran up against each other on the pavements in the darkness, or passed each other like spectres in the wan light of torches. The carriages, creeping along at a slow foot-pace, looked like a funeral procession. Out of doors everything was dreary and chill. How pleasant, then, to turn into a warm, cosy room, and see friendly faces shining in ruddy firelight. The humblest home looks inviting and hospitable on such a night.

A young girl had just passed in at a gateway, run up five pair of stairs, and knocked at a door.

"Open the door, Paul; it's me, make haste."

The door was opened in an instant, and showed

behind it a boy of eight or ten years of age, with a very rough head of hair.

"What have you brought, Madeleine? Show me what you've got. Oh, what a splendid geranium! I never saw such a beauty—all covered with flowers."

"It ought to be a beauty; I had plenty of trouble to get it for what money I had to spend."

"And have you bought something nice for supper?"

"That I have; look here."

Madeleine lifted the cover of her basket. Paul peeped in with delighted eyes.

"However did you manage to buy all that, Madeleine? You hadn't much money."

"No; but I was in luck's way to-day, everybody was good to me. One fruit-woman chose me out these beautiful apples, because she said they were fresh and rosy like my cheeks; another put me in these nuts for nothing. So we shall have two dishes of dessert. Come, now, make the fire burn up nicely, while I peel the potatoes; then you shall lay the cloth, and we shall be all ready when father comes."

Madeleine began to move about the room, tidying, arranging, brightening everything she passed, and yet scarcely seeming to touch anything; she had an eye for everything at once, and neglected nothing.

"Paul, you have never combed your hair. Go into my room now, and make yourself tidy. I want father to find us all in apple-pie order to-night. And, Paul, I forgot the bread. Just run to the baker's, and get us a four-pound loaf. Let it be fresh baked, mind; don't bring us a stale one, as you do sometimes."

Paul ran to execute his sister's commission, and was soon back, carrying a loaf almost as long as himself, and of irreproachable quality. He then proceeded to comb away at his rebellious hair, which quite refused, however, to lie either straight or smooth. It was pleasanter work to lay the cloth, and he sang to himself as he bustled about helping Madeleine with her preparations.

They drew the table up to the fire, for the cold seemed to creep even through closed doors and double windows. The beautiful plant was placed in the middle of the table, flanked by the apples and nuts, the generous gifts of the good market-women. Three plates were set, and the pewter spoons and forks shone like silver. The room in which this little feast was prepared was indeed a pleasant sight. It was not very large; the bed where Paul and his father slept was in the corner farthest from the fire-

place; a small stove served for all cooking purposes; a cupboard at one side contained all the crockery; on a small chest of drawers opposite, Madeleine had tastefully arranged a few little ornaments,—one or two vases and cups, a lamp, and a tiny miniature breakfast-service, a present to Madeleine, and the admiration of all the neighbours. On the mantel-piece stood a small clock and two copper candle-sticks. By the fire was an old arm-chair, which no one ever sat in except the father, when he came in from his day's work. In one corner Paul had a little table, on which he kept his lesson and exercise books, and at which he sat to prepare for school. Madeleine's little bed-room was only just large enough to hold her bed, a table, and a chair; but here, too, the young girl's gift of order was seen at once. The little bed was very clean, and not a single thing in the room was out of place. There were some flowers in a glass, and, on a small board above the head of the bed, a work-box and one or two books.

Supper was ready now, and the two children began to listen eagerly to every sound. The house contained many families, and there were constantly footsteps on the stairs, and the opening and shutting

of doors, so that Paul and Madeleine often fancied their father was coming, and were disappointed.

"It is late," Madeleine said, as she looked at the clock. "How vexing it would be if father didn't come back to-night! I am afraid the potatoes will be quite spoiled."

"He will be sure to come; you know he said he should be home at the very latest by seven to-night. He would have written if he found he couldn't come. Here he is; I am sure it is his step this time."

A step was really on the stairs, the slow, heavy step of a tired man, but he was not alone. There was a pattering of little footsteps after his on the stairs, and Madeleine said she knew it could not be her father.

The footsteps stopped at the door, however, and there was a knock. Paul ran to open, and found himself face to face with his father, who was holding by the hand a little girl, very thinly and poorly clad, and blue with cold. The child cast a wild and frightened look around her as M. Gerard led her in.

"Here, Madeleine," said her father, while Madeleine stood motionless with astonishment, "I have brought you a present, my child. What do you say to it?"

"Father!" said the young girl, amazed and bewildered.

"Wait till I have warmed her a little, and then you will see what she is like. Give me your hands, little one, that I may rub them for you before you come near the fire, or they will hurt you too much. Are not you glad we have got here at last?"

The child looked down, and did not speak.

"Have you lost your tongue out in the cold to-night?" Still silence.

"Well, well, we won't tease you. You'll talk fast enough presently, when you know us a little better."

"But, father, who is she? Where does she come from?" asked Madeleine, still with the same look of consternation.

"It is a long story, Madeleine. Let us have supper first; and when she has gone to sleep I will tell you. All I can say now is, she is your cousin."

"Our cousin!" repeated Madeleine, with ever-growing astonishment.

"Yes, your first cousin. But whatever do I see on the table? Why, flowers, and a feast fit for a king! Have you gone daft, children, while I have been away?"

"Have you forgotten, father, that it is the 17th of January?"

"I had quite forgotten, and you remembered, Madeleine. What it is to have a kind heart! Come, give me a good warm kiss, my children. The sight of your happy faces is the best feast to me, though I don't turn up my nose at flowers, or a good supper either. Well, the birthday-feast you have prepared for me shall serve as a welcome, too, to this little stranger. Perhaps she never saw anything so good and gay before."

It was easy to suppose so from the great eyes with which the child seemed taking in all around her. But though she opened her eyes, she kept her mouth close shut.

"Come, now, you will have to unlock your teeth to take in some of this soup, which smells so nice. Put a plate for her, Paul, and we will see what she can do."

The three drew round the table, but the little girl slipped away to the farthest corner of the room when they wanted to make her sit down with them. Neither by threat nor entreaty could they persuade her to open her lips to taste anything or to speak. She did not cry, she did not seem exactly frightened

but her face expressed so obstinate a determination that it was useless to struggle with it.

M. Gerard looked sad and discouraged. "Well," he said, "hunger will be a match for her in the end, but it seems our task will not be an easy one."

"Are we going to keep her, then?" asked Madeleine.

"Certainly; she has no one else in the world."

"I should be very glad to have her if she would only not look so cross," said Paul.

Madeleine let fall the spoon which she was just lifting to her mouth, when she heard her father's words, and an expression settled on her face which was not at all of the kind to brighten a festal party. A shade had come over all the group round the little table; it really seemed as if in an instant the lamp had grown dim and the very flowers had faded. M. Gerard looked grave and anxious—Madeleine was quite silent. Just at this moment a knock came at the door. It was a neighbour, M. Ravaud, who lived in the rooms opposite. He used often to drop in of an evening.

"You are late with supper to-day," he said, looking with surprise at the scene before him.

"Yes, I have only just come in," replied M. Gerard; "I have been away for a couple of days, you know.

Take a seat, neighbour, and have a bit of supper with us. I must tell you why you find us so gay with flowers, and with such a savoury supper, the pleasant odour of which no doubt reached your room. It is all my Madeleine's doing, because this is my forty-eighth birthday."

"Much to rejoice over in that, certainly! What have your forty-eight years to do with flowers?"

At a sign from his father Paul had risen and offered a chair to neighbour Ravaud.

"No, no, thanks; I will stay where I am," said the misanthrope, seating himself near the door. "It is quite enough for me to smell your soup at a distance."

"Do you never take soup, then?"

"I take soup! I should rather think not. Dry bread does well enough for me. When it is so hard that it almost breaks my teeth, I cook it up with a little hot water and salt; but it isn't often I take the trouble."

"Ah, you haven't got a good daughter like mine, you see, to cook for you and manage your housekeeping."

"No; I am thankful to say I haven't. No offence to you, Miss Madeleine, but I have less cares and

anxieties than those who have children; that, everybody will allow."

"And less happiness," rejoined the father, casting an eye of pride on his fair daughter.

He was forced to admit to himself, however, that the expression on Madeleine's face by no means added to her beauty at that moment, and gave some support to the old bachelor's argument.

"Whatever is that little black thing I see over there?" asked. M. Ravaud, pointing in the direction of the child.

"It is a little girl I have brought home with me to-day."

"What for?"

"To keep."

"Where did you pick her up?"

"She was bequeathed to me."

"A fine bequest indeed! If I'd been you I should have declined with thanks. Hadn't you enough with two children of your own? She looks for all the world like a wild child of the woods. Does she come from New Zealand?"

"I must ask you not to say anything to hurt the child," replied M. Gerard, gravely.

"All right, all right; no offence. I've nothing to

say against the child, if you like her; but bless me, I can't think how people can like to have a swarm of children always round them."

"Are you so very happy, then, living all alone without a soul to love you?"

"Happy! no, of course not. But then who thinks about being happy. I'm quiet enough, and that's something."

"What makes you come in here, then, now and again to spend a bit of an evening with us, if you like so much better being alone? You know I don't want to keep you away, neighbour; you're always welcome, and I'm glad to see you; but does'nt it show you do want a little company and a little kindness to cheer you up sometimes?"

"Tut, tut," said M. Ravaud. "I can do well enough without kindness, or love, or whatever you call it; but when you've been sitting alone all day copying away dry law papers, it does you good to hear voices and to see people's faces now and then in the evening."

"Right, right; so it does, even when they are faces you don't care about. But when they are faces you love, then it is worth working hard all day to have them to come back to, and find them happy

and smiling in the evening. Believe me, neighbour, hard work and true love are the two best things in life. I have both, and I am happy, and I can't help pitying you who live all alone."

"Well, you had no need, at any rate, of more children beside your own."

"Nor did I go in search of any. This one has come to me without my seeking, and I don't complain."

"It's your own affair, of course," replied M. Ravaud, gloomily. "I should have thought it a better arrangement, now, if God had sent some children to be brought up in that great house over the way, where there are none at all, and the people cannot tell what to do with their money or time."

"Well and good; but that is not the question."

"Things are very badly arranged in this world somehow."

"So many people think; but I would not like to change places with the great people opposite."

"Well, you choose to be contented, and I see plenty to grumble at. We each please ourselves, I suppose. I wish you good-night."

"What! have you had enough of us already? Does it offend you that I don't wish to grumble too?"

"I am going to bed. That's the best way of passing the time after all. I wish you joy of your new treasure."

"Poor man!" said M. Gerard, when he was gone; "he does not know what a joy it is to come home after being away two days. Come and give me another kiss, my children."

Paul flung himself into his father's arms, but Madeleine came up to him slowly, and printed a very cold kiss on his forehead.

M. Gerard, hoping that her ill-humour would wear away gradually, took no notice, anxious not to make bad worse.

"Where is she to sleep, father?" asked Madeleine, coldly.

"I think your bed is large enough to take in a mite of a child like that without disturbing you, Madeleine."

Madeleine made no reply. She undressed the child as she might have done a doll, put it into bed, and left it without a word. The little one submitted without resistance. M. Gerard followed every movement with troubled eyes.

"Paul!" said M. Gerard all at once, as if a sudden thought had struck him, "go and say to

Madame Minette that I have a favour to ask of her, if she will let me come down to her room."

Madame Minette was a model mother, who lived on the floor below M. Gerard's. Always cheerful, clean, and active, she had a smile and a kind word for every one who came in her way, and especially for any who needed her advice or help. With her five children, and never without one in arms, she was yet never too full of her own affairs to do a service for others, or to receive their confidences. Madeleine always ran to her when she got into any difficulty in her father's absence. Madame Minette's husband was a clerk, receiving about £60 a-year, and with this sum, and a little needlework which she managed to do herself now and then, she contrived to feed and clothe her family and to keep her little home in perfect order. There was, of course, no luxury in such a household; indeed, they never knew what it was to have a mouthful to spare, or to spend money on what was not absolutely necessary.

Madame Minette, on receiving M. Gerard's message, replied that as the children were just getting ready for bed, she would rather come upstairs herself. She left the younger ones in charge of her eldest girl, who was eight years old, and a staid little

woman for her age, as her mother said, in pardonable pride at the good results of her own training. The baby Madame Minette took upstairs with her on her arm, for he could not boast of more than the ordinary share of goodness even for his age, and from morning till night kept up a perpetual uproar with cries either of delight or of displeasure. In spite of his passionate temper he was as fat and flourishing as his mother could wish, and she regarded him with well-satisfied eyes as the very pattern of a well-born, well-nursed, well-fed baby.

It was needful to coax and soothe him into a state of comparative quiet before M. Gerard could at all make himself understood by Madame Minette. At length he managed to say—

"I have a favour to ask of you, Madame, a real service that you may do a friend."

"So much the better, neighbour. You know I am always glad to serve you."

"Well, then, just come and see, first of all, what I have brought back with me from my travels."

He took the lamp, and half opened the door of Madeleine's room, so that Madame Minette could peep in. Her astonishment was great to see on Madeleine's spotless pillow a little dark head of hair,

and a pair of large deep-set black eyes shining just above the sheet like living coals.

"What in the world have you there?" she asked.

"No one had told you, then, of my new possession?" replied M. Gerard; "I brought that back from my journey."

"That? but it's a child, isn't it?"

"Yes, a child to be sure, fallen to me from heaven."

"From heaven! It's rather a black specimen, I must say, to come from above. But it's a pretty child, too, with those great dark eyes. It's a girl, isn't it? Does she understand what we say?"

"I really cannot tell, for we have none of us been able to make her speak yet. Let us leave her to go to sleep."

As they turned back into the sitting-room, M. Gerard went on—

"She is a niece of my poor wife's, and has no other relations in the world but ourselves; her mother is just dead. I want to ask you, Madame Minette, if you would be so good as lend us a few of your children's clothes, till Madeleine has washed and mended her own, or till we have got her some mourning. She must have a black frock, poor child."

"I will lend you Susan's Sunday suit by all means, and welcome, M. Gerard."

"No, not the Sunday suit, please Madame. Let Susan wear that for a day or two, and lend me the every-day one, that will do better."

"I will help you to make the mourning, Madeleine," said Madame Minette. "How you will like working for her! You feel like a little mother to her already, I know."

Madame Minette did not pride herself on her discernment, and always judged of other people just by her own feelings, so that she had not taken any notice of Madeleine's silence, or drawn any awkward conclusions from it. Madeleine only turned away her head that she might not meet her father's anxious, questioning gaze. She was fighting a battle with herself.

Madame Minette was soon up again with the required clothing, and, quite drawn to the poor neglected little one by the pleasure of doing her a service, went on to prophesy that the child would become the darling of the house, and a daily growing delight to them all.

"There can never be too many children in a house," she went on. "I have five now, you know,

and sorry indeed would I be to part with one. When the last came, I told my husband I was more delighted than I was with the first. Why, Madeleine, you will make a charming little mother; and Paul will never want for a plaything now."

"Ugh!" said Paul, who was beginning to catch a little of his sister's ill-humour; "she's too ugly to please me."

"Just wait till she's washed and dressed and has her hair brushed like a little Christian, and then see if you don't alter your mind. Why, she has lovely eyes even now, poor little dear, and no mother, too. Good-night, neighbour; good-night, children. Why, my baby's dropped asleep on my shoulder. I must pop him into his crib, and get some sleep myself while my little gentleman will let me."

Without paying any heed to Madeleine's unbroken silence, Madame Minette, who generally asked questions and gave the answers in the same breath, went away convinced that the arrival of the little black-eyed maiden was regarded as a godsend by all.

When M. Gerard found himself alone with his children, he turned to Madeleine and said—

"I am sure, though she will not tell me, that her name is Esther. She always looks up when I call her so. Does that name remind you of anything, Madeleine?"

The young girl kept for a moment her sullen and offended look, then suddenly turning rather red, she replied—

"I seem to remember loving some one very much long ago, who was named Esther."

"You are right. When you were quite a little girl you were very fond of some one whose name was Esther. She was your mother's youngest sister, and she loved her as her own child. Esther spent the first few years of our married life with us; then she left us, in spite of our entreaties, to marry a man whom we hardly knew, and whom we both distrusted. From that time we never heard of her. Anxiety and fretting about her broke down your poor mother's health,—her last thought was of her sister. 'I am not uneasy about our children,' she said, 'I know you will take good care of them;—but my poor sister! Ah, if I could have seen her once again before I died!'

"Many years passed without my hearing anything of her. I had almost ceased to expect ever to hear

again, fancying she must have died in some distant country to which her husband had taken her. The day before yesterday I received a letter from one of my old friends, telling me that a sick woman, without any means and in the last stage of exhaustion, had arrived in the village where he lives. She said she was going to Paris to seek for me. Illness and want had so preyed upon her, however, that she could go no further. She would not tell her name, and did not say she was any relation to me, but I could not for an instant doubt that it was Esther. I said nothing to you, however, in case I should be mistaken. When I reached the village yesterday morning I found that she had been dead some hours. I saw her on the bed where kind hands had laid her, and recognised her instantly, altered as she was. Poor Esther! how she must have suffered before her fresh, joyous face could have been so changed by want and misery. She had no money with her, nor clothes, nor papers to tell her history. Either she had been robbed, or had been compelled to part with everything for food. She was buried this morning, and the child must have been sent to the parish if I had not brought her here with me. The good woman at whose house your aunt died, took

care of her till I came away, and the child has not spoken a word since except once to ask for her mother. She neither cried nor slept in the train, but sat quite still with her large eyes wide open. She is a strange little creature."

"Yes," said Madeleine, "very strange."

"We must see what care and kindness will do for her."

Madeleine did not respond.

"Don't you think you will be able to love her now?"

Madeleine hung her head.

"Would you have left to common charity, the child of an aunt whom your poor mother loved so dearly?"

"No; but don't ask me to love her yet. I will try . . . . only" . . . .

"I cannot think it can be very hard to love a little creature who is so dependent on us, and so lonely," rejoined M. Gerard, in a tone of some severity.

It was not a very happy "good-night." Madeleine went into her room, and cast a look of repugnance at the little figure in her bed. The child was asleep. She had crept quite under the clothes, so that all

that could be seen of her was just the top of her head, and a few black curly locks on the pillow. Madeleine knelt down to say her evening prayer; but she could not collect her thoughts or calm her agitation. She felt she ought to ask God to put into her heart an unselfish love to this poor little creature thus cast upon her care; but she could not; she still felt so rebellious at this unexpected change which had come upon her whole life. She had been left alone now for some years with her father and brother, and young as she was at her mother's death, had been the little house-wife ever since. She had performed all her duties most conscientiously, and had become accustomed to being the centre of the family. Her father always praised her in a manner that flattered her self-love, and her life was less really unselfish than it seemed. She thought her father ought to have consulted her before putting this new charge upon her. "We were very happy by ourselves," she said to herself, "what must this little stranger come to disturb us for?" At length Madeleine got into bed. She lay down as far from the child as she could, so as not to touch her, and meant to try and go to sleep as fast as possible, and forget she was there. But it was a vain resolve.

As soon as ever she closed her eyes a nervous start shook her from head to foot, and she gave up even trying to go to sleep, so as to avoid the uncomfortable sensation. Soon her thoughts began to travel back from the present into the past. Madeleine was very little when her aunt went away, but she seemed still to have an indistinct remembrance of her pretty face, her gentle voice and warm caresses. As she went on thinking of these old times, which since her mother's death she had almost forgotten, because no one spoke to her about them, many little scenes came back to her memory in which Aunt Esther was the leading figure,—such games they used to have, and such story-telling in the twilight, Madeleine seemed to remember it all now. Then she could recollect her mother's sad face when Aunt Esther went away. She used to sit and cry almost every evening before the lamp was lighted, and Madeleine could never find out why. And now this aunt, who had been so loving and beloved, was dead, had died in the utmost want and wretchedness, and all that was left of her was the child lying by Madeleine's side. How her mother would have loved and cherished the little orphan for that poor sister's sake, and yet Madeleine felt as if she could not love her

or be glad she was come. She shed very bitter tears during this long night, tears which seemed to scald her eyelids and her cheeks. What was to be done? She had taken a dislike to the child from the very first moment, and had a strange shrinking from her. Then she was not like the fair, laughing face Madeleine remembered as her Aunt Esther's. Was she really her child? Madeleine would have been glad to doubt it, that she might indulge her dislike with a more quiet conscience. Had not her father been too hasty in taking upon himself a burden to which, perhaps, after all, he was not bound? Ought he not at least to have consulted Madeleine, on whom it must fall most heavily. To have a child constantly to watch over, and take care of, and teach, was no light charge, unless you really loved it, and Madeleine was quite sure that this child she could never love,—no, never.

Almost the whole night was spent in these thoughts and questionings with herself. Towards morning, however, when the streets began to grow noisy, Madeleine fell asleep. When she awoke, the grey dawn was peeping in at the window. She had not yet come back to a full consciousness of all that had happened the night before, when a stifled

sob made her start. Then she recollected herself, sat up, and tried to look into the eyes of her little companion. The child had crept to the foot of the bed, as far as possible from Madeleine, and was sitting outside it, crouched up and crying, with her face hidden in both her hands.

"What is the matter?" asked Madeleine, in a tone not very likely to win the child's confidence.

There was no reply, but an unbroken flow of tears. After a little while, came a sorrowful cry:—

"Mamma, where is mamma? I want to see her!"

"Poor child!" said Madeleine, more touched than a moment before she would have thought possible. "Let me cover you up again with the clothes. You are half frozen. Stay, I will get up and light the fire, and give you your breakfast. You had nothing to eat yesterday."

The child allowed herself to be put back into bed, but did not cease crying. While Madeleine was dressing, she followed all her movements with her large watchful eyes. Madeleine was obliged to admit to herself that they were the most beautiful eyes she had ever seen; but they made her feel ill at ease. It seemed to her that that searching gaze must read her very soul, and that the child must

know how little prepared she was to love her. Such continued silence also appeared strange in so young a child; it would have seemed more child-like if she had chattered away all the time. To be so still, and utter only that one cry of grief, was scarcely natural for one of her age.

Madeleine's heart was a little softened towards her, however, and she made haste to light the fire and prepare the coffee. Her father was already gone out, and Paul was just ready to start for school. She gave him his breakfast; then broke some bread in a cup, and poured some boiling milk on it for the child, but when she took it to her, the little one still obstinately refused to touch it. Out of all patience with her, Madeleine put the cup down by the fire again, and began to dress her. The child looked in astonishment at the strange clothes laid ready for her, and pushed them away. Madeleine made two or three vain attempts to get her to be dressed, and then threw petticoats, stockings, and all down on the bed, and went away, resolved to take no more trouble with such a little rebel. Too much irritated and vexed with herself to feel at all hungry, she cleared the breakfast things, put the coffee-pot away in the cupboard, and began to clean and

tidy up, and rub the furniture with almost passionate energy. She was so employed when Madame Minette half opened the door and peeped in.

"How is the little girl?" she asked, without observing Madeleine's hot and excited face.

"I don't know; not a word will she speak," replied Madeleine.

"Did she sleep?"

"Yes, she slept."

"Has she taken any breakfast?"

"No."

"And you are letting her starve like that? It is a very bad thing for a child of her age to go so long without food. You must give her some breakfast directly."

"I didn't need telling that, Madame," replied Madeleine, with dignity; "but she doesn't choose to eat any breakfast."

"Well, just let me try her; I shan't be so soon discouraged. Where is her breakfast?"

And seeing the cup of milk keeping warm, the kind little woman took it in one hand, while with the other she carried her great baby, and went up to the child with a pleasant smile. "Why, my little one," she exclaimed, "haven't you had your breakfast yet?

There's a lazy little girl to like going to sleep better than eating. Look at my baby-boy; why he has had two breakfasts already this morning; and he looks comfortable enough, doesn't he? See, now, I am going to put him down on the bed, while we two get our breakfast together. We shall soon manage that. Now then, open your mouth and shut your eyes!"

But the pale little face did not brighten; no smile came on the set mouth; the great sorrowful black eyes remained steadily fixed upon the speaker. Madame Minette tried all sorts of coaxing and little devices to get the child to eat, but without success. At length, as a last resource, she said—

"You grieve me very much, because I love you, and I want you to eat to do you good."

At these words the eyes of the child softened; the little face, so firmly set before, relaxed; she half opened her lips and took spoonful after spoonful from the hand of the good woman, but never during the whole time removed her eyes from her face.

"Will you get up now?" asked Madame Minette.

The child looked at the clothes which Madeleine had thrown on the bed, and seemed willing to submit to the toilet she had refused just before.

Madame Minette got some hot water, washed her very carefully, brushed and combed her thick black curls, and then taking up baby, who had been all this while tumbling about gleefully over the bed, amused at all that was going on, she led the little girl into the other room, and made her sit down in a warm place near the stove.

"Now tell me what your name is?" she said.

"I am called Esther, like mamma," said the child, in a clear soft voice, very pleasant to hear.

"Well, Esther, my little girl shall lend you a doll to play with this morning."

"I want to go with you."

"No; I can't take you with me, but I will come back again. Talk to her now and then, Madeleine, as you go on with your work, so as to pass the time away."

Madeleine's temper was in no way improved by seeing that Madame Minette got on so much better than she had done with the little girl. She was not willing to own that Madame had used means to succeed, which she had not even tried,—patience, tenderness, gentle persuasion. She felt more than ever set against the child. Esther fell back into her silent mood, and when Paul came in from school,

he found her again crouching up in a corner of the room, and watching Madeleine with no friendly eye.

"You must look after the fire and the child, while I go to the shop at the corner," said Madeleine to her brother.

"What are you going for, Madeleine?"

"To get some stuff for a black frock; father gave me the money."

Paul went up to the child, and found her not at all such a little savage as he had thought. She was interested in his bird, and helped him to feed it and to clean the cage. When the cage door was opened, and the tame goldfinch perched on her head, she laughed aloud with delight; but when Madeleine came in again, Esther shrunk back to her corner, and would not speak another word. There was no means of persuading her to come to the table and sit with them at dinner-time; she ate upon her knees what Paul brought her, and when he was gone back to school she took the old doll up in her arms again, and sat motionless watching Madeleine's movements, as she had done all the morning.

Thus the day passed. Madame Minette could not come up again till towards tea-time.

"What, still there?" she exclaimed; "always still

and silent in the corner. I don't like that; it's not natural. I would take her with me to cheer her up a bit, but my little Johnny is very poorly, and I am afraid it may be the beginning of a fever. See, little one, why don't you play with your dolly, like my children? You ought to let her help you lay the cloth, Madeleine; that would amuse her. She will certainly get ill if she goes on much longer in this way."

"I can do nothing at all with her," replied Madeleine.

"Ah, you don't know how to go about it, that's it. Children are like plants; they open to the sun. They want to be loved, you see, or they will never grow up anything at all. Just look at my big boy here; if he didn't feel I loved him, do you think he would be laughing in my face all day long, and patting me with his little hands as he does now? Come, baby, kiss the little girl; love her pretty then; put your arms round her neck."

But just as this little performance was beginning, a shrill voice was heard on the stairs—

"Mamma, come down quick. Johnny says he is so hot, and he has thrown all the clothes off."

Madame Minette was off in a moment, and soon

after, sent one of her children up stairs to say Johnny had the measles, so she could not come any more for fear of bringing it.

Esther thus found herself left in the sole charge of Madeleine. When Paul came home in the afternoon, her face brightened a little, and she was even persuaded to leave her stool, and come into the room. She ate what was put on her plate at tea-time, and then sat perfectly still, watching Madeleine put the things away. M. Gerard was silent and thoughtful. When the child was gone to bed, he said to Madeleine—

"Perhaps I did wrong to bring her home with me, after all."

"Why, father?"

"Because I see you are not a bit yourself since she came. I should scarcely know my own, bright, merry Madeleine."

Madeleine bent her head without replying.

'Think how much she is to be pitied. Not a soul in the world to love her, poor child. Madeleine, I should never have believed you had a heart so hard."

"I have not a hard heart."

"I never thought you had. You have always

been such a good daughter to me, such a good sister to Paul. How is it you cannot love this child?"

"Because she looks like a little imp. As soon as ever she came in at the door, she seemed to bring trouble with her."

"I only see in her face the trace of suffering, too early learnt. No doubt, the child has been hardly and roughly treated as well as her mother, and this has given her the wild look you notice. Is it her fault? Let her only be loved and treated with gentleness, and she will soon be quite a different child. We shall even think her pretty then."

Madeleine was again silent.

During the night, she was awoke by Esther's restless movements, and heard her whispering—

"Mamma, oh mamma, do, do come and fetch me."

Then they both fell asleep again, and Madeleine forgot the words, or thought she had been dreaming.

She had cut out and prepared the black dress, but when she wanted to try it on next morning, Esther positively refused.

"I don't want a black dress," she said; "I won't have a black dress."

"You must have a black dress to wear because of your mamma," Madeleine said, impatiently.

The child turned her eyes suddenly upon her with a look of terror.

"Mamma does not like black frocks; she is in heaven, where they wear white frocks. The lady told me she was gone to see the good God, and I should go to her. She will soon come and fetch me."

"No, she will not come and fetch you; your poor mamma is dead."

As she heard the last word, Esther turned upon Madeleine like a little lion—

"It is not true; she is not dead. It is papa who is dead. I saw him on his bed, he could not move or speak, and was very cold. Mamma cried, and so did I, but he didn't mind; and some men came and fetched him, and put him in the earth, and I never saw him any more. I did not care a great deal, because he used always to beat mamma, and I did not love him much; but mamma is not dead. She kissed me and bid me good-night, and then the kind lady took me away, because mamma wanted to go to sleep, and when I woke next morning, they said she was still asleep. And then the gentleman came and took me away with him in the great carriage that goes so fast."

Esther had told all this in a high, shrill voice, and as fast as she could speak, as if she wanted hardly to understand herself what it all meant.

Madeleine, touched to the heart for the first time with the thought of the child's great sorrow, drew her to her, and pressing the little curly head against her, said—

"Poor child, poor little Esther."

Esther lifted up her head, and said again, almost fiercely—

"Mamma will come and fetch me; she will come soon."

"No, she cannot come and fetch you, darling; that is why I am making you a black dress."

Esther looked at Madeleine a moment in doubt and terror; then, with a piercing scream, she fell backwards. Her features were drawn; she was in violent convulsions.

Madeleine rushed to Madame Minette's room, and made her come up. In another moment both were standing over the child, doing for her all that could be done till the nervous twitching ceased, though she remained unconscious. They put her on the bed, and Madeleine sat down by her, laying wet bandages on her forehead, and gently rubbing

the little stiffened limbs. Madame Minette had said that all danger was over, but Madeleine could not feel reassured. Esther lay so pale, so cold, so utterly motionless. It was terrible to see her so. Oh, what would not she have given for a movement, a sign of life!

When M. Gerard came in, he was so alarmed at the condition of the child, that he went at once for the doctor. He pronounced the case to be serious, as the brain seemed much affected. He left a prescription, and promised to call again the next day. How endless the night seemed to poor Madeleine. How almost intolerable became her self-reproachful thoughts, as the clock ticked slowly hour after hour, and the child never stirred! How could she have been so cruel, so hard to her? She hated herself for her incomprehensible selfishness, and besought God to give her time to repair the wrong she had done. She dared not believe her prayer would be heard, however; she deserved to be cruelly punished, she well knew, and her heart seemed ready to break as she thought that Esther would never again unclose those great, dark eyes.

For three days fear alternated with hope. On the third day M. Gerard, who ran in as often as

possible from his work to see how the child was, had just gone out, and Madeleine was laying the cooling wet handkerchief on Esther's burning brow, when she opened her eyes, looked at her, closed them again, then once more raised them to Madeleine's face with a little smile on her lips. She tried to say something. Madeleine bent her ear to catch the words: "You are like mamma."

Madeleine could scarcely refrain from throwing her arms round the child, but she feared to excite her. Esther spoke again: "Is mamma not coming?"

"She is in heaven," said Madeleine, very softly; "you shall go to her."

"Soon?"

"Yes, soon, but not just now. Will you not stay with us a little while first? I will love you very much. You know I love you, Esther, don't you?"

The child looked steadfastly at her for a long time. Suffering, weakness, a blending of surprise and satisfaction, gave a strange softness to her eyes: "Mamma loves me, too," she said.

"Yes, darling, she loves you. Perhaps I shall not be able to love you so well as she does, but I will try to make you happy with us. Now lie quite still

again. We musn't talk, because it will tire you, but I will stay by you."

Esther turned her face on the pillow with a look of happiness, such as it had not worn for a long time. Madeleine gave her one long, tender kiss. Oh, how she was repaid for her three nights of watching and anguish! how her heart glowed now with the new love!

Ten days later, M. Gerard, when he came home from his work, saw his three children together round the fire. Paul was at his little table doing his sums; Madeleine was sewing, and Esther, who had left her bed for the first time, was seated close by her on a little stool. She still looked very weak and tired, but not so pale as when she first came, and as she leant her head against Madeleine's knee, she handed her cotton and scissors or pins, as she needed them. Once or twice she had said quite softly, half as if asking Madeleine a question, half as if speaking to assure herself—

"Mamma is not dead, she is in heaven."

"Yes, dear one," answered Madeleine, "she is in heaven."

The father drew near to the group, and stroked his daughter's fair hair. "I have found my own Madeleine again," he said, in a half whisper.

She raised her bright eyes to him, but they were full of tears. "I was very wicked, father, wasn't I?"

"You have found out now, my child, that it is not always quite easy and natural even to love."

"Oh, what should I have done if she had not got well!"

"Thank God, He has not put you to that trial. And now you will have plenty to do to take care of her and bring her up. You will have to be a real little mother to her, Madeleine, and that is a serious thing for a girl of sixteen."

Madame Minette came in just as M. Gerard was saying these words. Afraid of bringing the infection from her children, she had not seen Esther since she was first taken ill.

"Well done!" she exclaimed, "here is a change for the better in our little wild bird. Who would have known her for the same creature as she was a fortnight or three weeks ago? It's just what I told you, Madeleine; only love a child, and it'll be sure to do well."

"Do you hear, father? You needn't be uneasy, then. We will love her so much that we shall be sure to bring her up well."

An Easter Monday Picnic.

IT was Easter Monday, a splendid Easter Monday, such as we should like them all to be. Little feathery clouds fleeted across the blue sky before a fresh breeze, which promised frolic and fun to all who would come out and meet it in the open fields.

In M. Bertal's dining-room a group of children of various ages were eagerly awaiting the signal for a start. A basket and a rather heavy-looking package were on the table, also waiting to be disposed of. The basket contained little dainty provisions,—apples, cakes, chocolate; the package, well tied up with string, high and rounded at the top, and spreading out to a broad base below, looked suspiciously like a pie,—a family pie of most respectable dimensions. These preparations for a picnic seemed highly satisfactory to the young people, who were busily talking over and relishing them in anticipation.

Two girls of fourteen and fifteen, Amelia and Matilda, —the two inseparables as they were called,—thought it due to themselves to show a dignified indifference to such trifles.

"Come into my room," said Matilda to her cousin, "we shall still have a little time to talk before we start."

"Oh, go by all means, my doves, you will have five minutes at least for billing and cooing, and saying ineffable things."

So said Rodolph, the eldest of the group, a boy of sixteen, and a merciless mocker of everything in the manners or sayings of other people that did not fit in with his notion of being natural. What was natural to him was, it must be confessed, a little rough, but the roughness was chiefly on the surface; and much as he prided himself on being neither sentimental nor soft-hearted, he was sometimes surprised into more tender moods than he meant to appear. He pretended to delight only in the prosaic and matter of fact, just as his sister Matilda delighted only in the romantic and poetical. But a pretence is only a pretence after all, as he was now and then told with a smile by those whom he called the higher powers.

Lucian, M. Bertal's second son, was not yet

fourteen. He was the learned man, the wisehead of the family; he was for ever poking over his books, and even in this little waiting time, in the midst of all the hubbub made by the younger children, he had plunged deep into a scientific review which his father had left on the table.

Next to him came the troop of little ones all under twelve, Arthur, Charles, Henry, and little Janet, a nine years old brunette, with only one great fault, that she could never bear blame, or even the most innocent joke at her expense, without bursting into floods of tears. There was still one wanting, for the whole family party numbered eight.

"Here is papa coming; I hear him," exclaimed Rodolph, "and there's Aline never ready; she'll make us miss the train, I know."

"Well, we shall catch the next if she does," replied Lucian.

"Thank you,—and the days are so long at this time of the year, and we have so much more time than we want, I suppose!"

"Come children, let's be off," said M. Bertal, as he came out of his office, carrying the letters he had just been writing in one hand, and thrusting several papers into his pocket with the other.

"Oh, papa, you can give me one of those papers to read in the train," said Lucian.

"We shall see, we shall see. Just now the great thing is to be off, if we don't mean to miss the train. Where is your sister? And the other two girls? Why are they not all ready? Call them, we have no time to lose."

"Matilda, Amelia," everybody shouts at once, till the window-panes rattle with the noise.

"Hush, hush, what an uproar, we are not at the ends of the earth," replies Matilda, appearing at the door of her room which opens into the dining-room. "Whatever do you make such a disturbance for? Beside, Aline is not here."

"She would be, I have no doubt, if you did not leave her everything to do," observed M. Bertal, gravely.

Matilda looked offended and glanced at her cousin, as if to say, "Didn't I tell you so?"

"Here I am, here I am," exclaimed Aline; and a pretty girl, eighteen years of age, with rather an anxious motherly look already on her young face, enters and throws a bundle of shawls and cloaks upon the table.

"Whatever is all that for, Aline?" asks M. Bertal,

"do you think we can burden ourselves with all that heap of old clothes?"

"They are not old clothes, papa dear, and we shall certainly find it cold as we come back; and then we can't sit down on the damp earth in the woods. We had better burden ourselves with a few wraps than take cold. Rodolph will carry a good many of them, I know; he is so kind."

"Heigho!" said Rodolph with a sigh, which was belied by his merry eyes, "people have to pay for their reputation, and just now mine costs me its weight in gold."

"I will take the pie," said Lucian, catching at the precious thing, and giving it a toss up in the air so clumsily that he calls forth a general cry of alarm.

"No, no, no," exclaim several voices, "don't let Lucian carry it, he will let it fall into the river."

But Lucian held it fast, and his sister pleaded his right to make himself useful, and to do his share towards helping the party. One of the little boys took the basket, and the door shut at last behind the merry troop.

They had six stories to descend, neither more nor less, and the tenants of the various apartments which they passed, stopped their ears, wondering

if a horde of barbarians had taken possession of the house. The porter at the door popped out of the way to let them pass, and laughingly wished them a pleasant holiday. As they walked along the streets, the poor little children to whom Easter Monday was like all other Mondays, looked at them with envious eyes. Who would not have liked to be one of such a party? Their beaming faces, the basket, the pie, even the great pile of shawls on Rodolph's arm, all suggested ideas of pleasure, of country, of freedom, and of fun. M. Bertal led the way quickly, for there was no time to spare. Matilda and Amelia, feeling their dignity rather compromised by the wild behaviour of the boys, crossed to the other side of the street, and walked at a little distance from the rest; Aline was on in front; little Janet was left alone with her brothers. Lucian, who had a spice of mischief in his disposition, suddenly looked at her and said—

"How comical you look in that hat, Janet; you might be taken for Judy's clever dog."

Janet turned very red, tried to laugh, then suddenly drew back three steps, and burst into a sobbing cry.

"Janet, Janet what is the matter? What have you

done to her, Lucian?" said Aline, hurrying back to the child at the sound.

"Done to her? Nothing at all. She is only crying for fear she should forget how."

"Come, come, my darling, don't cry. What has hurt you? Tell me, then."

"He, he——"

"Did he push you without meaning it, or tread on your toe, darling? You know she has chilblains, Lucian, and her feet are very tender. You should take care."

"No, no—he didn't hurt me—but he said I looked like—like—a learned dog in that hat." And again the sobs burst forth.

"Well, it was not at all kind; but you should not take it as if he meant it. Brothers always pay bad compliments to their sisters, and yet they love them very much all the time, Come, now, don't cry any more. Let us make haste on, and we shall be just in time. Papa has gone forward to take the tickets. But where are Matilda and Amelia gone? I can't see them anywhere."

Matilda and Amelia, engrossed in confidential talk about the injustice of the world in general, and of their world in particular, had passed the door of the

station without noticing it; but just as Aline spoke they came in sight, hurrying back, rather red in the face and confused at having made such a mistake.

At length the whole party was marshalled into the booking-office, and as M. Bertal counted the tickets, he cast an eye over the group to be sure that no one was forgotten.

"One, two, seven, nine, ten; yes, that's all right. Now then, sharp into the carriage, and let us see if we cannot all pack into the same compartment."

"We will go on the top," say the great boys.

"Shall you not be cold?" asks Aline, anxiously.

"Cold! Do you take us for children?" exclaims Rodolph. "We are men. Let me pile up all these affairs beside you in your compartment. There, that's a good riddance. Now good-bye till we get to Reveil."

And Rodolph clambers up behind his two brothers, who have already taken their places on the roof.*

"But where is the pie?" asks Aline, when everyone is seated and comfortably settled around her.

"Lucian has got it with him, no doubt," replies Amelia.

The good little sister-mother feels a slight thrill

* A practice allowed on some French railways.

of anxious foreboding about the precious packet, but she checks it, and says nothing.

Amelia and Matilda have ensconced themselves in opposite corner-seats by one door; their heads are bent forward close together, and they keep up an unbroken murmur of talk. M. Bertal and Aline occupy the other two corners, and the three younger children sit between them. Presently Henry tells his little sister that she takes up too much room, and keeps him from seeing out of window. Janet does not answer, but in another minute or two she is seen to be in a flood of tears. Another very gentle reproof from Aline. The little girl sobs out that she is very unhappy, everybody finds fault with her, nobody loves her. Her brothers shrug their shoulders; her elder sister puts her arms round her, and tells her she is a foolish little girl, and makes herself unhappy without any cause. A moment more, and the train stops at the first station. A very large lady gets into the compartment, and seats herself by Janet's side. As she does so, she touches the child's cheek with the corner of a basket she has in her hand. Janet dares not say anything, but once again the hot tears run down her cheeks.

"Oh, you poor little darling," exclaimed the lady,

quite distressed at seeing the tears; "how I must have hurt you. I am so sorry."

"Oh, indeed, it is nothing, Madame," said Aline.

In truth, the little cheek was neither scratched nor bruised, but still the tears went on flowing. The unhappy cause of the child's distress was at a loss what to do. Aline begged her not to be troubled, and at the same time did her best to persuade Janet that there was really nothing to cry about. Henry stooped towards Janet, and whispered in her ear—

"I didn't cry when I burnt myself, and yet the doctor said it was a very bad place; but girls haven't a bit of courage."

Poor Janet's face clouded over afresh, and more tears gathered fast under her eyelids.

"Poor child," said Aline to herself; "how I wish she could cure herself of this over-sensitiveness, which makes her so unhappy!"

At length the tears were dried; quiet was restored in the carriage; and by the time the travellers had reached Reveil, all faces were bright and smiling.

"Here we get out," said M. Bertal, unfastening the door. "Quick, now, all of you; and let us try to catch the omnibus."

Everybody jumps out. Everybody is sure that

nothing is forgotten; there are the cloaks, the basket, the—— What is that cry of distress that bursts from the little group standing there on the platform? Why are Rodolph and Arthur running along by the side of the carriages which are already again in motion? "Oh, the pie! the pie!" they exclaim. And as they hear this cry, M. Bertal and Aline guess at once what has happened, and Aline remembers her vague presentiment.

"It is here!" exclaims Rodolph, as he seizes the first round of the steps to mount to the top of the carriage from which he thinks his brother came down.

But the engine is already getting up its steam; a porter holds the daring young fellow back by the arm; and the passengers who are gazing on, lean out of their windows and laugh. There is no more hope.

"Your pie is gone on to St. Germain," says a workman as he passes; "you must wish it a pleasant journey."

"You idiot!" says Rodolph to the guilty Lucian; "you stand there as still as a stock, as if it was not at all your fault. Come, let us go now, or we shall have the good fortune to miss our omnibus as well as lose our pie."

"How silly we were," exclaims Aline, as she

hurries along. "Why did'nt we remember that Lucian is the last person in the world who ought to be trusted with a pie?"

So, very red in the face and out of breath, some irritated at Lucian's stupidity, and the coolness with which he seemed to take it; some furious at losing one of the promised delights of the picnic; all vexed with each other or themselves,—they took their places in the omnibus. Lucian, who since the unhappy event had not yet spoken a word, stood on the step of the carriage, turning his back to the rest of the family.

Matilda and Amelia, especially mortified at the ludicrous scene on the platform, and the amusement they saw on more than one face bent out of the windows, sat as far as possible from the rest, hoping that the other passengers would not think they belonged to the same party. Aline told her father in a subdued voice, lest she should be overheard, that it was a pigeon-pie, which had cost eight francs (6s. 8d.); a most beautiful pie, bought at one of the best shops. M. Bertal, who had borne the mishap with great calmness, quietly said they must make up their minds to what could not be helped. The younger children were not sparing in their epithets.

But the omnibus had not gone very far when, as if by common consent, they were all struck with the absurdity of the little scene on the platform. They looked at one another, at first feeling a little ashamed, and then an irresistible inclination to laugh came over them all, and cleared the most furrowed brows. Only Lucian would not join in the laugh. To be called an *idiot* before so many witnesses was a grievance not so soon to be forgotten. Before long our little party, with their good humour regained, found themselves in sole possession of the omnibus. All the other passengers had been put down at their destination, and now Malmaison was passed; and then the pretty part of the road, which is bounded on one side by the Seine, and on the other by the hills of La Jonchère. The water, made tremulous by the wind, reflected the bright blue of the sky. The meadows were golden with buttercups. They passed through Bougival, and saw a great wooden raft float under the bridge, towed along by horses at the side. At length the omnibus stopped and turned round. They were at Marly, and must get out.

"What are we to do without provisions?" asked M. Bertal.

Lucian, who took this question as a reproach, re-

sumed his sullen air, and stepped apart from the rest.

"Oh, papa," said Aline, "don't trouble about that. We shall no doubt find some farm where we can get butter and cheese, and some eggs to make an omelet. We shall not do so badly after all. Let us think no more about the pie, but hope it has fallen into good hands, and that somebody will enjoy it, if we don't."

"If it has fallen into good hands, it will be taken to the lost-property office; and as we shall certainly not go and ask for it, it will be wasted, so you had better wish it may fall into bad hands, and then, as you charitably say, somebody may be the better for it."

"Come, Lucian," said his elder sister, going up to him; "just say you are sorry you were so stupid, and then be in a good humour again. We want all to be happy to-day."

"Whatever do you make such a fuss about a pie for, then?" said Lucian, pettishly.

Aline could almost have cried. She felt herself so unfit to manage so many different dispositions, that the task which her mother's death had left to her, seemed for the moment too hard and overwhelming. Gradually, however, she recovered her cheerfulness,

as she drank in the pure fresh air of the spring, and feasted her eyes on the young verdure; above all, as she watched the pleasure of the little ones. Each child came to bring its newly-found treasures for her to admire—a sweet-scented violet that had grown under the hedge; a tuft of primroses from the bank; or to call her to look at a tree full of blossom, discovered a good way off in the fields. Oh, the charming month of April, when all nature revives in fresh youth and beauty!

Presently they came to a farm, situated at the edge of the wood. The house was low and irregular, and occupied the end of a large yard. Along one side of the yard ran stables and cattle-sheds, most of which were now empty. In one corner was a magnificent dung-heap, around which clucked, cackled, and crowed, a numberless tribe of hens and chickens. Some ducks were on their way, with a quacking noise, to the pond, where they were wont to carry on their gambols; a little further off some turkeys were waddling along, watching with an air of haughty disdain the birds of inferior class; and all the inhabitants of the farmyard seemed to regard with anything but a hospitable eye, the strangers who had come to invade their domain. Janet and Henry

were not long in discovering a little calf, which had been left in the shed, and very graciously allowed itself to be caressed. Most of the other boys gathered round a family of young puppies. All sought their pleasure in their own way. Aline meanwhile had gone into the kitchen to make arrangements with the mistress of the house. This good lady did not prove herself at all of an obliging disposition.

"Can you let us have some bread?" was Aline's first question.

"Yes, if you like it as hard as a stone."

"Some butter?"

"Very little to spare; only make it twice a week."

"Cheese?"

"You can have a little."

"And some eggs?"

"If the fowls have laid any about the yards or in the stables, you can have what can be found; if there arn't any, why there arn't, that's all."

"Will you kindly make us an omelet for our dinner, presently, or shall we do it ourselves when we come back from our walk?"

"If anybody makes an omelet here, it will be me, and no one else, you may be sure of that. I

don't let other people come and meddle with my stove."

Discouraged at these very ungracious answers, Aline turned to a young girl, fourteen or fifteen years of age, who was standing behind her mother. She looked very shy and awkward, and unpromising; still Aline thought she would try the power of kind words on her.

"You will help your mother to get us something ready, won't you?" she said, smiling; "we shall be back about half-past twelve, or by one at the latest."

The girl reddened, turned her eyes away, and muttered something not easy to understand. Secretly, however, she had made up her mind to do all she could for the pretty young lady, who spoke in such a gentle voice, and looked so kind.

"Have you brought knives and forks, and plates?" asked the farmer's wife.

"No," said Aline.

"Then you will have to eat with your fingers; we don't keep things here like people in towns, I can tell you, and there are such a lot of you."

"Give us what you have, and we will manage," said Aline. "We shall not grumble if only things are clean."

As she turned to leave the kitchen, Aline saw crouched up in one corner a little figure which she had not observed before. It was a girl of seven or eight years old, with her head bent down upon her chest, her hands crossed upon her knees; she sat motionless, and seemed to take no notice of what was going on around. Such an attitude seemed strange and sad in so young a child, and Aline looked at her in astonishment.

"We don't take no notice of her," said the farmer's wife, answering Aline's glance; "she's blind."

"Ah, poor child! was she born so?"

"No; it came on with an illness. Her mother died last autumn, and left her in our charge. She was my sister-in-law. The little one is always fretting after her mother. She sits all day long just as you see her now."

"How long have her eyes been in this state?"

"More than two years."

"Does nobody take any trouble to rouse her?"

"Oh, it's no good. You may keep on saying, 'Come, now, cheer up, cheer up,' but she never stirs or looks a bit different. Before her blindness she was as merry as other children. She had learned to read, though she was so young. She was her mother's

only child, and was coaxed and petted just like a lady. Now there is nothing to be done with her. Of course nobody has much time to be fussing after her here, for there is plenty to do to look after all the animals in the yard. When our big boy comes in from the fields, he takes her out a bit; he puts her on his shoulder and runs along with her, and then we hear her laugh sometimes. She is very fond of Michael. When he comes in she looks happier directly. Don't you like Michael — eh, Claudine?"

The child turned half round at the sound of Michael's name, but did not answer.

"Let me take her with me," said Aline, almost before she had thought what she was saying, for she did not know how the rest might like the company of the little blind girl.

She went up to the child, and gently stroked the little thin hands clasped together on her knees.

"Will you come with me, Claudine?" she asked. The child raised her head with a surprised look, but made no other movement.

"She does not seem afraid of you," said the farmer's wife; "that's odd, too, for she never likes strangers."

"Will you come into the wood with me?" Aline repeated; "I will take care of you."

As she spoke she took her hand softly, to add persuasion to her words. The child did not speak, but got up, keeping hold of Aline's hand trustfully.

"You are not afraid to come with me, are you, Claudine?"

Claudine shook her head.

All the children who were scattered about the yard soon gathered around the blind child. The girls caressed her gently; the boys stood looking at her half in pity, half in vexation.

"I don't know what you are going to bother us with this child for," said Rodolph; "it's just like a woman's idea."

"Just think, she never moves out of her dark corner," replied Aline; "and she was so pleased to come."

Before putting the basket of provisions away in safety, Aline opened it, and took out one of the largest and nicest cakes, and put it into Claudine's hand, who was at no loss what to do with it. Then they started for their ramble, Aline and Janet undertaking the charge of Claudine between them. It was agreed that the best walkers should go on a

voyage of discovery into the forest, and should find out the biggest trees, and the wildest places, and all that was most worth seeing. Meantime, Aline, Janet, Henry, and the blind child would remain nearer to the farm, and would amuse themselves more quietly.

How lovely a wood is in spring-time, when all the trees are putting forth their young shoots, and the tender green of the tiny leaves is just peeping out of the reddish brown of the buds, to greet the pleasant sunshine! Wild flowers, bright and fragrant, cluster round the boles of the old trees. Every here and there a modest blue violet lifts its head, growing not in a tuft, but alone, as wood violets are wont to grow, upon a tall and slender stem. In the clearer spaces of the forest, where the great trees have given place to open glades and copses of younger growth, there are great beds of yellow jonquils, like sheets of sunshine, fallen on the grass. As they came suddenly upon such a bed, the children of Aline's party burst from her with shouts of delight. Even Janet let go Claudine's hand, and scampered on with Henry to gather a harvest of these golden treasures of the spring, which she had never seen before in such abundance. Only the blind child was left by Aline's side.

"We will sit down here, Claudine, till they come back," Aline said. "It is a nice place to rest."

When they were settled on a dry, mossy seat, Aline gathered a flower, and put it into Claudine's hand.

"Do you know what that is?" she said.

Claudine felt it over gently with her fingers, smelt it, and then said, "It is a jonquil."

"Used you to gather jonquils before you were ill?"

"Yes," said the child, with a sigh.

"What colour are they?"

"Yellow."

"Do you remember how they are made?"

No answer. Then Aline took the little hand, and passed the fingers over all the parts of the pretty, smooth flower, one by one, explaining their shape and use as she went on. The child's face brightened, and became full of interest and pleasure, in spite of the motionless eyes, and the absence of any light in them. But when Aline left off talking to her, and the children came back, the old sad look came over her face. Seeing this, Aline began to ask about her cousin Michael, and the smile soon reappeared.

"You love him well, don't you?" Aline said.

"Yes," replied the child.

Only that one word, no more; but it was the most emphatic, convincing *Yes*, that could well be heard.

"He is very kind, and he loves you, doesn't he?"

Always the same *Yes* to each of these questions, and always the same satisfied smile.

"She is not altogether miserable, after all," thought Aline; "she has one bright spot in her dark life."

Janet, though she had loaded herself with jonquils like any flower-girl, was still anxious to spare a hand for Claudine. They all three went on wandering about thus, hand in hand, for more than an hour, first down one grassy track, and then another, without ever going very far from the appointed meeting-place. At length, merry shouts and calls were heard from a distance, and soon the whole scattered party were on their way back to the farm. Once more they crossed the glades where the jonquils grew, and threaded the mossy paths of the older wood, and reached the farm just as the farmer's wife was lifting from the fire a smoking, savoury omelet. Plates of brown ware were placed on each side the rough wooden table. At one end was a huge round loaf, at the other the steaming omelet; on one side a large pat of butter, on the other a piece of cheese. The farmer's wife had shown herself less stingy in deed

than in word. There was no fear, at any rate, that they should die of hunger.

They gathered around the table, but there were not seats enough for all. The little ones must stand. They were short, too, of plates and knives and forks. Rodolph offers to take a large porringer instead of a plate, on condition that his share of the eatables be large in proportion. The knives and forks must be equally divided, those who have a knife must do without a fork, and those who are provided with forks must dispense with knives; no pluralities can be allowed. Aline proceeds merrily to portion out the omelet, while Rodolph falls upon the loaf, which he cuts into huge slices. Janet eats up her share of the omelet and bread very quickly, and then asks Aline, in a whisper, to give her what apples and cakes and chocolate she is to have. She crams all into her pocket, making it swell out in an alarming manner, and then slips away from the table, and out of the room.

On a log, in the corner of the yard, the little blind child is sitting in her usual position, with hands crossed upon her knees, and her head bent forward. She cannot see the creatures feeding and frolicking around her in all the joy of life, nor the fruit-trees

[illegible] sweet shining of the [illegible] world within, [illegible] She looked [illegible] eyes filled [illegible] She sat down [illegible] knee, [illegible] but [illegible] smiles. [illegible] is [illegible] seemed [illegible] all [illegible] like [illegible]

in her mouth. "It is very nice," she said, but with an indifference which puzzled Janet, who thought that the day when one first tastes chocolate must be a great day in one's life.

"Won't you have some more?"

"No, thank you. I want to keep it all for Michael."

A little disconcerted at having sacrificed so much of her dinner for Michael instead of Claudine, Janet was silent, and looked at the child's blind face. Its expression of gentle sadness touched her heart again; she put her arm round Claudine's neck, drew her to her, and pressed her cheek against her own without speaking.

Claudine seemed a little frightened at first, then she flung herself into Janet's arms, and began to cry.

"What are you crying for?" said Janet.

Claudine could not answer, for she really did not know herself; but the joyous mirth of the happy band of children round her that day, their delight in all they saw, their love to each other, and their kindness to her, had made her feel more bitterly than she did most days, how lonely and sad and dark her lot was. Her little heart was full, and

she could not help sobbing as she leant on Janet's shoulder, and felt her tears falling on her face. Poor blind Claudine, whom nobody loved, except Michael, the great, tender-hearted boy, and he hadn't much time to be with her, for he was hard at work all day.

But here come the children out of the house, all full of laughter and fun. They have cleared the table of all that was eatable, and now they must make the most of what little time is left for play.

"Hallo, Janet, what are you doing there?" cry the boys. "We are going to have some games in the field behind the stables. Come along; papa and Aline are coming too."

Suiting the action to the words, Rodolph caught up his little sister by the waist, set her on his shoulder, and carried her off triumphantly into the large meadow, where he set her down at the foot of a tree.

"Oh, how strong you are, Rodolph!" said Janet, drawing a long breath. "You carry me as if I were a feather, and yet I am a big girl now, twice as big as Claudine, though I am only eighteen months older."

"You are a great girl, mademoiselle," said Rodolph,

making her a profound bow; "and a very heavy one too, anything but like a feather I can tell you. My shoulder tells a different tale."

"Who asked you to carry me, then?" said Janet, a little offended.

"Come, come, don't be vexed now, my little queen. I'll say I thought I was carrying a sylph if that'll please you. Pray don't cry now. We want to be jolly. I say, Lucian, my boy, if you think we are going to let you creep off into a corner to read like an old pedant, you are mistaken, as you'll soon find out. We are going to play blind-man's buff, and everybody is to join, even papa."

"Of course, I'm going to be in the game," said M. Bertal, coming up with Aline at the moment. "I reckon myself one of the best players."

"You don't want me," said Lucian, who had not yet come down from his Olympus.

"What, old fellow, do you think we can get on without you?" said his eldest brother, clapping him kindly on the shoulder. "I say; forget it if I spoke too sharply this morning; I didn't mean it. I know well enough that if there is an idiot in the family it's not *you*."

Lucian's brow cleared as by enchantment; he gave

his brother a good grasp of the hand, and took his place at once in the game. After a little wild rushing about the field, they formed a ring, and began French blind-man's buff. Rodolph, as blind man, stood in the middle of the circle, which stretched out as widely as it could. After several vain attempts to guess by the voice who had caught hold of the stick, Rodolph suddenly raised it and struck out, feeling sure that every one would be sharp enough to get out of the way.

The circle broke, there was a general scattering, and in the excitement of the game, no one perceived at first that Claudine had crept into the field, and that the blow of the uplifted stick had fallen on her head. A sharp cry roused their attention. Rodolph tore the bandage from his eyes, and rushed up to the poor child whom he had hurt. The blow was a heavy one he knew, for he had a strong arm, and, being quite sure of only striking the air, he had put forth all his force. The poor child was pale and trembling, and drops of blood were trickling through her fair hair.

"Give me your handkerchief, Janet, quick!" said Rodolph; and he ran to the little stream, which bordered the field on one side. He dipped the

handkerchief in the water and brought it to Aline, who gently bound up the wound. Claudine still shook all over, but she had left off crying.

"Does it hurt you much?" asked Aline.

"No, not much. I was only frightened."

Rodolph was almost as pale as the child. He was afraid he had hurt her badly, and could hardly be assured it was not so. Aline took the little girl upon her knees, and soothed her with gentle words, till, forgetting her fright and her usual shyness, Claudine even began to talk. She told Aline all about Michael, and how good he was to her; and then with a smile of the greatest satisfaction, let Aline feel her pocket, which was stuffed full of Janet's gifts, which she had saved for Michael. Then she told a little of her life; how she was often alone almost all day; how frightened she was of the cocks and the turkeys, when she tried to cross the yard, and how glad she was when she heard the heavy wheels of the carts coming creaking along the road, because then she knew Michael had done his work, and would soon come to her.

But now M. Bertal gave the signal for the start homeward. They must go back to the farm, gather up the wraps, fetch the empty basket, and make

their way to the omnibus. Rodolph lifts the little blind girl in his arms, and carries her home, talking to her cheerily all the way. The accident is soon explained to the farmer's wife, who is amazed to see Claudine coming back with a bandaged head, and in the arms of a great boy, with whom she seems very much at home, and is talking away as confidentially as if he were Michael. Rodolph sets her down on a bench in front of the house, and the children gather round her to say good-bye. Each one is anxious to leave some little love-token with the poor child. The small boys lay a humming-top and some marbles on her knee. Janet, with an inquiring look at Aline, unfastens a velvet from her throat, to which hangs a little coral cross; this she puts round Claudine's neck, makes her feel the cross, and whispers—"You can show it to Michael when he comes home."

The child's face, which had grown rather sorrowful over so many farewells, brightens up again at these words. How many things she will have to show Michael, and how much to tell him! All promise to come and see Claudine again, and not to forget her. Rodolph comes up in his turn and says—"Well, little one, have you forgiven me for hurting

you? Give me a good shake of the hands, then, and let us be friends, eh?"

While this little scene was going on, M. Bertal was talking with the farmer's wife, rather apart from the noisy group.

"It is an agreement then," he said, as he turned to go, "that you bring her to town some day, and we will take her to a good oculist, who will say at once whether there is any hope of a cure."

"Yes, sir,—to be sure, sir,—thank you, sir," was the woman's repeated rejoinder. She had been so well paid for her eggs and her trouble, that she had become quite civil. Aline looked at her father inquiringly as she heard his last words.

"Oh, papa, have you really any hope? do you think something might be done to give her her sight again?"

"I cannot tell, but from this woman's account, I should think it not at all impossible. In any case, the attempt shall be made, but without giving the child any idea of it. She is so sensitive that the disappointment would be worse than anything else."

The children cannot cross the yard without stopping to give one more caress to the white calf, which turned its head to look at them. The fowls

and ducks set up a joint chorus of farewell. The slanting rays of the sun are just glorifying the tops of the tall trees, and cast long bands of light across the stream and meadows. The wind has fallen, and the water of the Seine, quiet and unruffled now, reflects like a perfect mirror the willows and poplars on its banks. Everything is so calm and bright that the children feel the spell, and are silent awhile. Little Janet walks by her sister's side holding her hand, till Aline feels tears dropping on her glove.

"What is it, darling?" she asks, putting the little hand that trembles in hers.

The tears come faster still. "I am thinking of Claudine," Janet says.

"And why does that make you cry?"

"Oh, I wish so she was not blind."

"Well, then, I will tell you a secret which will make you glad, but you must keep it all to yourself. Papa means to send Claudine to a doctor for the eyes, and he hopes perhaps she may be cured."

"Oh, I am so glad, *so glad!* How kind papa is!"

"Yes, but it is not at all sure that she can see again. The disease may be incurable."

"But I will pray to God for her every day," said the little one, after a moment's silence.

Aline made no answer. She remembered how, when she was older than Janet, she had prayed to God every day that her mother might get well, but her prayer was not granted. This did not make her feel rebellious now; she understood better what prayer was, and how God answers it; but she had not courage to tell the child that we are not always heard just as we wish to be.

"She is so unhappy," Janet went on. "Her aunt and cousins are not kind to her. Just think, Aline, I saw her aunt give her a blow because she had knocked over a bottle that was standing on the ground. She does not look as if she loved Claudine. I love her very much, poor, dear, little Claudine. She is so patient and so brave. Wasn't she brave not to go on crying, even when Rodolph hurt her so? She turned very pale, but she tried hard not to cry."

"Yes, I saw she was very brave, and I thought it might be a lesson to my little Janet, who very often cries for very little things, or even for nothing at all."

Janet turned very red; but after a minute she said in a low voice—

"I will try not to cry any more,—so often."

They have been all some time in the train, and

now it is going through the tunnel. The locomotive gives its piercing scream, which seems as if it would never stop. Those who have been having waking dreams, or are half asleep, must rouse up, for it is time to get out. There they are all on the platform again, trying to get their party together amidst a crowd of other passengers. One of the porters as he passes and sees them, calls out, "Hallo! here are the folks who lost their pie in the morning. They don't seem to have starved after all!"

Lucian assumes an air of offended dignity, but the rest cannot help laughing heartily.

It is quite night by this time, and the gas is lighted in the streets. The party, so overflowing with spirits when they set out, are just a little tired, and more than a little sorry too, that this long-expected holiday is over. How pleasant it would be to begin it all over again to-morrow, and *not* to lose the pie a second time!

Matilda and Amelia are both sweeter in temper by the genial influence of nature, blue sky, and the scented air of spring. They have forgotten their grumbling, and even their secrets, and are as amiable and cheerful as any. A bright smile keeps breaking over Janet's face at a pleasant dream that flits again

and again before her fancy: it is Claudine with her sight restored, and oh, so happy. Janet goes through the whole process over and over to herself. The visit to the oculist, who says that the disease can be cured; an operation performed directly, with marvellous results; till Claudine, who has not the least idea of what it is all about, suddenly exclaims—"Why, I am not blind any more!" Janet had read a story in which everything turned out just so.

This dream was so absorbing to her that she even forgot to cry when Henry teased her, and when she fell upstairs and her brothers laughed at her clumsiness. Last of all, before they separated for the night, Rodolph and Lucian came to give Aline a kiss on each cheek, and to say to her—"You are a dear good sister, and we do all love you." And Aline's heart leapt up with the feeling that it was true.

What is there so good after all, at every age of life, and every season of the year, as freedom, fresh air, country flowers, cheerfulness, and shall we not add,—little victories gained over ourselves, and sympathy shown with those who suffer, and the hope of helping them?

The Little Marquis;

OR,

Pride and its Punishment.

[My young readers will better understand this story if they know something about the troubles in France at the time of what is called the French Revolution of 1792. At that time the peasantry in France, who had long been suffering terribly from neglect and want, and heavy and cruel taxation, rose against the king and the nobles, whom they looked upon as their natural enemies. The nobles were not all to blame, though many were; but the people were so furious that they made no difference between the good and the bad, but tried to treat all alike. The little Marquis was one of a noble family which suffered in this way. You can read the whole account of this French Revolution in a very beautiful story, called "The Playfellow; or, the Peasant and the Prince," by Miss Martineau.—*Translator's Note.*]

INE was not a happy childhood. I was an only child, and my mother was dead. My father did not live at home during the first years I can remember, and I was left in the charge of a trusty nurse, who took me every morning to a school in the neighbourhood. When my father came home he sent me to college. I was put in the lowest class, for I was only between eight and nine years old

when I first went; and I was always at the bottom of my class, for nobody had ever made lessons interesting to me, and I did not like them at all. Latin declensions and French participles I thought were invented on purpose to torment little boy's brains, and I always came back from school tired and discouraged. My master would not take any trouble with such an idle scholar; he often punished me, and my companions made fun of me. When I got home, the exclamations over my soiled blouse and inky fingers made me hate still more my exercise-books, and the strange scrawl with which I had covered the pages. Only to look at them brought back the thought of the desk and the high form, where I had sat cramped up and cross with myself and everybody else.

My father was a silent, serious man; I was much afraid of him, and never felt that I really knew him. He scarcely ever spoke to me except to question me about my lessons, when we were sitting together at dinner-time. Whenever I was alone with him I felt as if a great stone had fallen on my heart. I could not lift my eyes or speak a word without effort. I think it was my father's being so very grave, and quiet, and distant that oppressed me so. He

was altogether a mystery to me. But as soon as ever dinner was over, and I had answered somehow the terrible questions about what I had been doing at school—as soon as ever I had crossed the threshold of the dining-room, and shut the door behind me, I was light-hearted and happy. College, grammars, my stern master, my mocking comrades, my father himself with his terrible searching eyes that made me tremble, all were forgotten; and I went to find Mariette.

Mariette was the good genius of the house. In form this good genius was not brilliantly beautiful, though to my eyes she was not wanting in charms. It is true she was old rather than young, but she was so active, and neat and sprightly; her eye was so bright, and her fingers so nimble, that it was a real pleasure to watch her. Mariette did everything in our house. She was cook and housemaid, and valet-de-chambre; she was my nurse, and had herself given me the first beginnings of my education. If my father had kept a carriage I verily believe she would have undertaken to be groom and coachman. Nothing daunted, nothing surprised her; nothing was too tiring, nothing too difficult for her to attempt. I am not sure whether my father fully understood what

a treasure of devotedness, faithfulness, ready and able service he had in her. He never gave her a word of approval, very seldom spoke to her at all; yet Mariette appeared perfectly satisfied. Perhaps she found the approval of her own conscience reward enough.

It was to Mariette I ran as soon as ever I could make my escape from the dining-room. I suppose it was tacitly understood this was how I was to pass my evenings, for no other amusement or companionship was ever provided for me. In winter, especially, how I used to enjoy that kitchen, lighted by a great fire in a good old-fashioned fire-place, and by the flickering flame of the little lamp! The kitchen was the only room in the house that never looked to me dull. I used to watch Mariette coming and going, brightening her saucepans, and putting everything in its place. It all seemed such easy and pleasant work, and I remember often thinking I would much rather be a cook than a scholar. I do not know if Mariette suspected that I had any such envious thoughts in comparing my lot with hers, but she would very likely have seen much sense in them, for she herself had never learned to read very fluently, and she rather gloried in the fact than felt it any disgrace. Never-

theless she used to be very careful in keeping her accounts for my father, who looked them over every week, for she had taken pretty readily to writing and summing; and it was only her spelling that left much to be desired. I used sometimes to amuse myself by turning over the leaves of the little account-book left on the table, and guessing what could be meant by those curious combinations of letters I never met with anywhere else. I soon discovered that *bœur* simply stood for *beurre* (butter); that *pain* (bread) was always written *pin*, and that the pronoun *eux*, which came over and over again, represented hens' eggs (*œufs*), and not, as I at first imagined, some mysterious personages not to be more clearly named. It shows how very little disposed I was to profit by a university education, that these mistakes did not at all shock me—that on the contrary French written in this way, seemed to me much more picturesque and interesting than the French of the school-books. I should much have liked to be allowed to use this fanciful orthography myself; but, heigho! with what stern indignation my master would have treated it! He would not have seen the charm of it a bit; of this I was quite sure.

When I had finished studying Mariette's account-book with far more care than my grammar, which lay

by the side of it with a little untidy heap of other ink-stained books, I used to find a snug corner by the fire, and ask Mariette if she would not soon have done. Mariette was very quick over her work; but every single pot and pan and cover must be bright and shining in its proper place, before she would consent to come and sit down beside me. When she did there began for me an hour of enchantment, which made up for all the troubles of the day, for Mariette had an endless stock of stories in her memory. I used to lean my head against her shoulder, and half-shut my eyes, so that I could not see anything except the leaping, flickering flame of the fire, which would take all sorts of forms at the bidding of my fancy, and following the turns of the story writing itself upon my brain. One evening when I had thus snugly ensconced myself, I made an unwonted demand:

"I want something new to-day, Mariette," I said; "a story I have never heard before."

"What, are you tired of the old ones, darling?" she replied. "When people want true stories told them three hundred and sixty-five times in a year, it does not do to be very hard to please."

"But, Mariette, you have lived much more than three hundred and sixty-five days."

"Yes, thank God. I shouldn't like to be obliged to count how many days I have lived; but what of that?"

"Why, then you ought to have a story for every day of your life."

"No, no, happily not that; but I have a good many, and I think if I try hard I may find quite a new one for to-night."

At the pleasant sound of these words I shut my eyes in excessive happiness. Just at that moment I would not have changed places with any one in the world.

But Mariette did not begin. I opened my eyes again, and looked up in her face. She did not seem to understand my mute appeal.

"Did you talk to your father at dinner-time?" she asked, abruptly.

"Yes, of course; I answered all he asked me."

"Only that? Why don't you talk to him as you talk to me?"

"Oh, papa makes me afraid of him; he is so stern and so cold."

"Ah! see how children judge their parents without knowing a word of what they say. Your father is not stern, he is not cold, he is only sad. He wants

some one to cheer him up, and you don't try to do it any more than that log of wood."

"Papa, sad!" I repeated, in a surprised tone; "but what for?"

"Ah! that is the question; perhaps because you are not what he would like you to be."

"No, that can't be it," I answered, "for when he came back from his long journey a year ago he was just as sad, and that could not be because of me, for he did not know what I was then."

"Well, I don't think that is the real reason myself, but I think you might comfort him, and you don't."

"If I was sure he looks so because he is sad," I said, hesitatingly, for I fancied I should have felt drawn towards any one who was unhappy, while my father's look and manner always froze me up and frightened me.

"He has enough to make him sad, my poor young master. Only to think what he went through when he was a child, scarcely bigger than you are now."

Mariette almost always called my father her "young master," which seemed very strange to me, for his hair was grey, his eyes were deeply sunk, his tall figure was bent, and he walked so slowly that he always appeared to me a very old man.

"How long ago is that?" I asked.

"Let me think. This is the year 1835, and that was in 1793. It must be forty-two years ago."

"Forty-two years!" I repeated, quite awed and astonished at the thought of such a long life. You must have been young then, Mariette."

"Yes, quite young, only twenty at the most; and a pretty girl, people used to say, though you mayn't believe it now. But never mind about that. It is quite as easy to do one's duty with a yellow, wrinkled face, as with a fresh and merry one. Well, we had come to live in a house a few miles out of Nantes,—a very fine house, quite like a castle, though it had no fortifications. Oh, what a beautiful place it was! How I should like to see that country again! It was as quiet as a wilderness, but so lovely. I was then in the service of your grandfather and grandmother. They were a good master and mistress; there was not another lady like your grandmother in all the country; she was just a saint—nothing less. She was still quite young then; but in those times people grew old very fast. Everybody knew that a violent death might come at any moment; it had come to the King, and none of his subjects could feel themselves safe after that. The idea had become so familiar to us that we

had almost ceased to tremble at it. Your grandmother thought of nothing but the miseries of the peasantry; she would have loved to help and comfort all the poor around her as she used to do in her castle at Quiberon; but we knew no one, and the house where we lived stood quite away from any village. Your father, 'the little Marquis,' as we called him (he has never borne his title since), was too young to be troubled by what was happening in the country. He had seen his mother cry when bad news came from Paris, but he soon forgot it in games with the farmer's children. How could he but be happy—a child with sun and fresh air, and great fields to play in, and liberty to run about and amuse himself to his heart's content? He was not a poor little prisoner like you; he had pleasanter things to look at than high houses and straight streets when he went out of doors. So he grew up a hale, hearty child, with a voice that shouted louder than all the rest. Everybody was bound to obey him, and he would not allow one of his playfellows to answer him a word. Those poor little farm children! he treated them just like dogs. M. le Marquis, his father, used often to laugh when he heard him; it was the true noble blood in the child's veins, he said, that would show itself. My

mistress used to grieve over it, and would sometimes say, with tears in her eyes, 'Poor boy, I am afraid for him in the future.'

"I could not help noticing that just at this time there was a great deal of coming and going and secret consultation in the house. One day I went into my mistress's room, and said, 'Madame, I see you are in trouble; will you not trust your faithful Mariette?' She took me tenderly by the hand, and said, very sorrowfully, 'I must not speak, Mariette.' At last I found out what it was. The army of La Vendée, to which my master belonged, was going to march upon Nantes, to retake that city from the Republicans. It was a desperate attempt. My poor young mistress spent days and nights prostrate in prayer before her crucifix.

"One evening, just as the little Marquis had been put to bed, there came a knock at the door. All the men belonging to the house had gone with their master; the old gardener and I were the only servants left. When the door was opened, a lieutenant of the army of La Vendée threw the reins of his horse to the gardener, and rushed into the house. My mistress was already in the hall; pale and trembling, she was leaning against the wall.

'Ah! Monsieur de Rive,' she said, as she recognised the lieutenant, 'you bring me bad news; hide nothing.'

'The army has been repulsed, Madame,' he replied, 'Cathelinau has been mortally wounded.' (I did not need to ask Mariette who Cathelinau was. I had already read everything I could lay hold of about the history of the French Revolution, and I knew that Cathelinau was one of the generals of the Vendean army, and that he had perished in this assault on Nantes). 'Your grandmother gave a deep groan at these terrible tidings, but she saw well from M. de Rive's face, that there remained still worse news for her behind, and she clasped her hands to hear the rest.'

'Your husband is wounded,' said he.

'Tell me all the truth,' she said, in a strange, steady voice; 'is he *only* wounded?'

'I swear to you, Madame, that is all; and he is not far behind me now. But the great thing is to find some means of concealing him. There will be a search made as soon as ever it is ascertained that he is not among the dead. He must remain hidden till the inquiry after him has been quite abandoned; his name is one of those most deeply compromised.'

'But where can we hide him?' says my lady, in a voice of anguish; 'we have no means whatever for concealment in this house, and where else could we carry a wounded man?'

'To the farm,' I cried. 'The farm people are known to be Republicans; no search will be made there. But the father is an old servant of M. le Marquis, and would not betray him for the world.'

'Yes, the father could be trusted; but, I am afraid, not the son,' replied my mistress.

'The son is away from home,' I answered; 'beside he comes of a good stock—like father, like son. He is noisy and quarrelsome, but he would not be false.'

"At this I saw the lieutenant stoop towards my mistress, and speak to her in a low voice. I guessed that he was asking if I was to be trusted.

'As myself,' she replied, turning her gentle eyes upon me.

'Well, then, let her take care of the child, while you remain concealed at the farm with M. le Marquis.'

'No, no; I will not be parted from my child,' she said; 'his father would not have it so. He is our only one, and must go where we go.'

"The farm was not more than a mile distant from

the house. I ran there, and soon arranged all with the good farmer and his wife. A bed was made ready for the wounded man in a room in the back part of the house, and it was agreed that the little Marquis should be dressed like one of the farm children, and should pass as such if any strangers came. I was also to remain at the farm.

"The lieutenant soon returned with two soldiers bearing M. le Marquis on a litter. He had fainted quite away, and took no notice of anything. We dare not think of seeking a doctor; our only hope of safety was in being forgotten. It would not be difficult to persuade any of the country people coming to the farm, that the family at the great house had suddenly gone away on hearing of the disaster at Nantes. We ourselves acted as surgeons as well as we could. M. le Marquis had received two balls in his chest, and a wound in the arm. The soldiers and the lieutenant left us, as they had to seek safety for their own lives. In spite of the want of proper medical attendance, my master seemed likely to recover. Two or three days had passed away, and we were beginning to breathe more freely, and even to speak of the time when we might escape to a safer distance. The little Marquis had taken pretty well to his part. He

thought it rather amusing to wear a coarse smock frock and to eat brown bread like the farmer's children, but he did not like them to treat him familiarly and call him their brother as they had been told to do. Even in his peasant's dress he would be leader and commander, and all the rest must do his will just as when he was the young lord at the castle. His mother had been very anxious at first lest his pride should betray all and lead to terrible results, and had made him promise to behave differently; but nature and habit were too strong for him. After a little time, as no suspicious visitors came to the farm, she became reassured.

"One morning, when the children were playing in the yard, a man walked up to the gate and stopped. He had an evil face, and the farmer's wife, who observed him, thought she had better get the little Marquis out of the way, without appearing to do so.

'Gaston!' she called, assuming intentionally a sharp cross voice, to mislead the spy—if spy he was—'Gaston, come here directly. Don't you hear me?'

'Gaston,' repeated the man, 'come, here's an aristocrat's name, at any rate.'

"Frightened by this remark, the woman called again.

"THE LITTLE MARQUIS IN DISGUISE."
The spy at the gate. —*Page* 90.

'Why do you order me about?' replied the child, proudly; 'you know you have no business to do it.'

'Hold your tongue, saucy child,' shouted the poor woman, feeling a cold sweat burst all over her; 'is that the way you speak to your mother?'

'To my mother!' repeated Gaston, mockingly. 'My mother is a marchioness, and you are only a farmer's wife.'

"The man had heard enough. He moved off without a word, satisfied that one of the proscribed nobles was concealed in that farm, supposed to belong to such sound Republicans. The farmer's wife, in consternation at what had just passed before the stranger, went up to Madame, and told her the whole story. She spoke in a low voice outside the door of the room, but my master heard all. He called the woman in.

'I am lost,' he said; 'beyond a doubt they will send to take me to-night. My wife and child must leave here this instant. Is your husband at home?'

'Yes,' she replied; 'but where can they go?'

'Haven't you any other farm, a shepherd's cottage, a woodman's hut? never mind what, so long as they are away from here before night. Mariette must

go with them, and presently they can escape to England.'

'God grant it!' exclaimed the poor woman.

"My mistress now returned to the room, leading Gaston by the hand.

'I have been scolding him,' she said, in a low tone to your grandfather; 'he must not know.'

'No, poor child,' said the Marquis, drawing Gaston to him, and kissing his curly head; 'no, I do not reproach thee, my boy.'

"Then, turning to his wife, he told her she must leave the farm instantly.

'It is impossible,' she said, turning deadly pale.

'It is absolutely necessary,' said the Marquis, in a decided tone; 'if you leave me alone, I may possibly escape the search. Madame Guillot is a notable person, and she may find means to hide me somewhere about the house, and to efface all traces of our having been here; but if we are all three together we cannot fail to be found.'

"My mistress durst not make any reply, but I saw in her face it was the final parting, and she knew it.

"All was quickly arranged, and we went. The little Marquis was placed on the old horse, in front of his

mother, who held him with one hand and the reins in the other.

'It grieves me that your wife should have to suffer for all the kindness she has shown us,' said my lady to the farmer as we went along.

'My wife has done her duty, and she is not afraid of anything,' he answered.

"We went on all the rest of that day and far into the night; then we stopped in a broken shed, and waited for daylight. Then we went on again till we came to a farm, where the people gave us some milk and some bread. We did in the same way for several days; but my mistress would not consent to leave the country till she knew what had become of her husband. The farmer, who had left us as soon as he had seen us out of reach of danger, came back at length and brought my poor mistress the heavy tidings. M. le Marquis had been taken the very night of our flight, and shot the next day. The farmer told us the whole story of what had happened at the farm in that dreadful night, while we were wandering on through the darkness to find some place of shelter. His wife had concealed M. le Marquis in a loft, behind some great heaps of hemp. She hoped the men might not happen to look there, but they carried on their search in such a way

that she felt from the first all was lost. At length they dragged the Marquis from his hiding-place, and forced him to stand in spite of his weakness; then he was brutally pushed down stairs by the soldiers, and she heard him murmur, 'My poor boy, may you never know what you have done!'

"The Blues (so the Republicans were called) used very abusive language to the poor woman for concealing in her house one of the enemies of her country. She replied, 'I have a son in the Republican army, and my husband is a patriot, but M. le Marquis has always been good and just to us, and I only did my duty in hiding him when he was in danger.' Upon this they troubled her no more, but went off with their prisoner. A few weeks later, we crossed the sea in a fishing-vessel, and landed in England."

"But that is not all?" I said eagerly, when Mariette made a pause.

"No, that is not all. No, indeed, that was but the beginning of our miseries. It is true the only danger we were in now was that of dying of famine; but only those who have lived in a land of strangers can know all the suffering it brings."

"You have forgotten one thing, Mariette; I have heard papa say that it was you who supported him

and his mother in England by your work, and that but for you they would most likely have died of hunger."

"Did he say so?" exclaimed the brave woman, in a tone of joyful surprise. "When, and to whom?"

"Only once; one day when a relation whom we did not know came to see us; do you remember?"

"Well, well, I am glad my young master has not quite forgotten; but it is not worth talking about.

"Your grandmother fell ill as soon as we reached London, so she could not give her lessons, which would have brought in much more money than my poor needlework. For three months we had barely enough to keep soul and body together. Poor little Gaston, who was growing so tall and thin, had very often nothing but dry bread to eat. He never mixed with other children, and had almost forgotten how to play; but he was just as proud as ever of his birth and of his name. It was not to be wondered at; this family pride had been cherished for generations among the nobles of France. A little aristocrat thought himself of other blood from the rest of the world. Our poor child did not know what this pride had cost him, and his mother shed many tears over his intractable disposition. He was not haughty to her;

on the contrary, he worshipped her, and would listen to everything she said. In the evenings she would give him lessons, and teach him all sorts of things too learned for me to understand or tell you now, but I liked to listen to her voice explaining them. To everybody except his mother, however, the little Marquis was as haughty as a prince,—even to me.

"We had been a long while in England, when some French people came to lodge in the same house with us. They were some old servants who had emigrated with their masters' families, and they seemed to want for nothing. Madame and I heard one day a quarrel on the staircase, and we listened. It seems that the son of these new comers had spoken familiarly to Gaston. Gaston, to get rid of him, had given him a box on the ears, saying—

'Perhaps that will teach you not to treat me like your equal.'

'Oh, of course, I'm not a prince,' said the other boy, angrily; 'but I have a coat which is not patched like yours, and I have enough to eat every day.'

'What do I care for that?' was the quick reply. 'I am not a well-fed, well-dressed clown, but I am the Marquis of Vandesse, and I beg you will not

trouble yourself to speak to me when we meet in future.'

'A fine marquis, indeed!' rejoined the little persecutor. 'You may well be proud of your title, since it was by that you betrayed your father to the Blues.'

"My mistress turned very white as she caught these words. How could this child have come to know their sad history? Would Gaston notice the words, and come and ask her for an explanation? He was very quiet all the rest of that day, sitting with his elbows on his books and his head resting on his hands. He did not say a word till he was put to bed, but then he called his mother, and she went and knelt down by him. Poor child! the taunt of the boy, joined to his own recollections, had shown him the whole truth.

'Mamma,' he said, 'what that boy said is true, is it not?'

"There was no need to ask him to say more clearly what he meant.

'Yes, my poor child, he spoke the truth, but how he came to know it I cannot guess; I meant you should never know.'

'Can you forgive me?'

'Dear one, how can I but forgive a wrong which you did without meaning it.'

"Then he flung his arms close round her neck, and trembled all over.

'Did my father know it was I who did it?'

'Yes; and his last words were, "May Gaston never know this!"'

'But I shall never be able to forgive myself or to forget it. Oh, this pride, this accursed pride, how I hate it!'

"The poor mother's heart was broken by the sorrow of the child; yet perhaps nothing but such sorrow would ever have cured him of his fault. From that day I have never heard him speak a proud word, but I have never seen him merry since. I really believe he has never been able to forget that terrible lesson. When we returned to France, he would not claim his property or resume his title."

All that I felt as I listened to this story of Mariette's I could never describe. Was she right or wrong to tell it me? Did she remember that she was speaking to me about my own father? I cannot say; but one thing is certain, that it made a change in my whole life. I could not bear to think of the sorrow that had been weighing down my father's heart ever since

he was a little boy. I felt instinctively that we should all find life too hard to bear, if we had to carry always the weight of the terrible consequences of a fault. I wanted to go to my father, take his hand, and cover it with tears, and say, "Oh, father, if only you had not known; or if only you could forget!"

I thanked Mariette, but I did not say a word to her of all these thoughts, and left the kitchen. I went straight to the door of my father's study, but there I stopped, with my hand on the handle. Then I opened the door without knocking. My father was seated before his desk, his face buried in his hands. It was just as I had often seen him, but his sadness drew me to him, now I knew its cause. I went up gently to his chair, and laid my trembling hand on his. He lifted his face, looked at me a minute, and then said—

"Gaston, I have neglected you too much. To-morrow we will begin to have lessons together every evening."

From that moment I loved my father, and was never afraid of him again. My poor father! why had I not begun to comfort him before.

A Tale of Song and Sorrow.

IN one of the most deserted streets of M——, might be seen, years ago, a spacious, many-roomed old house. The approach to it was through a large courtyard, the walks of which were overgrown with moss and weeds. Even the walls of the house were in many places green with damp and long neglect, and the small window-panes in their black settings gave a solemn and venerable aspect to the whole pile. Clearly this great family mansion belonged to the good old times, when air and space were not stinted, as they are now-a-days, by builders and contractors. It was full of mysterious corners and cupboards in the walls, rich in long roomy passages, and in closets under the stairs and in all unexpected places, which made it a very paradise for children who delighted in "hide-and-seek." At one extremity of the long court-yard was a garden-house, as old and dilapidated as the mansion to which it belonged. It

stood on a little knoll of rising ground. Steps cut in the grass led up to a short staircase, ascending which the visitor found himself at once in the little house. It consisted only of one story, and had but three windows. Out of the end window, all the glass had fallen long ago, and as it was of no immediate use, only lighting a little ante-room, it had been left unrepaired. The other two windows looked towards the great house, and these were seldom opened, the dwellers in the garden-house having no wish to invite the curious gaze of their neighbours.

And who were these dwellers in the garden-house? For many years it had been occupied by an old man, spare, small, with a stoop in the shoulders and a suffering look on his face, who might be seen passing in and out of the court every day at the same hour, with a rapid step and head bent down, never raising his eyes to look around him, but returning the respectful salutation of a beggar by the wayside, with as much dignity as though he had been a lord. This eccentric little old man, whose threadbare coat shone with long use, whose shoes were patched, whose hat showed the scars of many a battle with the elements, who had no warmer overcoat for winter than summer—this eccentric individual, whom the children in the big

house used to watch with noisy merriment, whom no one treated with much respect or consideration, was nevertheless a man of mark, a man of rare power. I do not say he was an illustrious man—one who had made a name for himself in the world—which is a very different thing. His greatness was known only to God, and to one or two persons who had watched how, through his long life, he had sacrificed himself for those he loved, made himself of no account, never consulting his own comfort, ease, honour, pleasure; and even these familiar friends may have been somewhat at a loss to understand the motive and the power of such a life. First it had been his mother whom he had sustained for many years by his labour; then a widowed sister, left with two children, had looked to him as her only support in life. Then all these died, and he was left alone. He kept up some acquaintance with a few friends of his boyhood, but these seemed to have scarcely more idea than he had himself of his genuine worth. Beside the few near relations to whom he had so quietly devoted the best years of his life, he had but one passionate attachment, and that was to music. When quite a child, he would stand transfixed with ecstacy when a hand-organ player came into the court where he lived, but

if—as alas, too often happened—the organ was untrue, and gave forth discords instead of harmonies, he would utter sharp cries of pain, and try to stop his ears. When he grew older, and his mother took him with her to the church, where he heard the great organ played, and the voices rising in pure and solemn harmony, it seemed to him heaven upon earth. He would weep much when the music ceased and he was obliged to return home with his mother. Every Sunday he was in his place, and after a time, the organist, hearing of the boy's passion for music, and noticing his rapt, ravished face, told him to come to him, and he would give him some lessons. His mother emptied the box which contained the hard savings of years, and bought him an old piano, which took up at least one half of their little room, and was the despair of all the neighbours. But Daniel was not long in learning how to draw out the "linkëd sweetness" from the poor instrument, and had the listeners possessed more practised ears, they would have discovered the genius of the true musician in the sounds which so irritated them. In excuse for their annoyance, which might else appear too selfish, it is only fair to say, that the boy, compelled to work all the day, used to begin his practisings at nine o'clock

at night, and carry them on sometimes far past midnight.

His talent presently found truer recognition, thanks to the recommendation of the organist to whom he owed its cultivation. Daniel obtained some pupils, and after a time was promoted to the place vacated by his old master, and was made organist of the parish church. His pupils, unfortunately, were for the most part very young ladies, who learned to play the piano only as a necessary part of the drudgery of a good education. They had not the smallest feeling for the true music which he played to them and vainly endeavoured to make them understand; their fingers would repeat the notes after him, but in a soulless manner, as a parrot might be taught to repeat lines from "Paradise Lost." At church, if persons were sometimes struck with the simple grandeur and pathetic beauty of the organ-playing, they contented themselves with saying, as they went home: "How sweet the music was at the church to-day!"

No one thought of asking whether the hands that made the mighty instrument thrill with such tones of power and sweetness, might not be themselves the interpreters of a rare and beautiful soul.

Anyone probably who. after listening to the music,

had watched for the organist coming down the stairs, would have been surprised to see a timid, shrinking, insignificant man, whose dull face never lighted up except when it was bent over the keys and forgetful of any human presence. If interest had been for a moment excited by the power of the playing, it would soon have been quashed by the appearance of the player, and the odd little musician would have been left free to return to the silence and obscurity he loved. Very few of the persons who attended the church where he played pretended to any acquaintance with music, and as no one had ever attempted to make a celebrity of Mr. Daniel, it had never occurred to him that such celebrity would be well deserved.

By strict economy and much self-denial, he had saved up money enough to buy a piano better than that on which he had made his first attempts at music, and in course of time a harmonium was added to his treasures. But the organ was his pride, his joy, his best friend. Mr. Daniel knew the delights of a composer as well as a performer, but he never played his own productions to any one. He had folios filled with manuscript music, which would have made the fortunes of a less modest man, but he guarded them like a miser from all curious eyes. He worshipped

and revered the old masters as if they were saints, and, as a natural consequence, held everything modern in absolute and undiscriminating contempt. In the houses where he taught, he was regarded as slightly crazed,—but a step removed from an imbecile; but he was gladly retained, nevertheless, because, somehow or other, the children made progress under his teaching, and the unpretending little man charged only half the price of any fashionable master.

The proprietor of the old mansion which we have already described, being an admirer of Mr. Daniel's talents as organist, had offered him the occupation of the garden-house at an extremely low rent; and as it had the great advantage of standing alone, so that he could indulge himself in music the whole night through if he pleased, without incurring the complaints of disturbed neighbours; as, too, the old rooms were more spacious and better for sound than any other tenement he could have hired at the price, Mr. Daniel gladly accepted the offer. The proprietor who thought thus kindly of the poor musician had long been dead, but he had left a clause in his will obliging his heirs and executors to leave Mr. Daniel in undisturbed possession of the garden-house, so long as he chose to remain, nor were they to displace him even if at

any time he should be unable to pay the rent. Poor as he was, however, never was tenant so punctual in payment as Mr. Daniel, whenever rent-day came round.

One day the inhabitants of the great house noticed with amazement that there was another occupant of the garden-house, beside the old musician. This was a fair, pale boy, with large blue eyes, with a strange depth in them. No one knew whence he came, nor how Mr. Daniel came to have charge of him. John—this was the only name by which the little stranger was known—never played with the children of the neighbourhood; he used to watch them sometimes through the window, but if he saw their eyes watching him in return, he slipped away. His shyness was not sullen or rude, it was rather that of a timid, high-bred child. In comparison with the other boys who played about the court, he seemed a little prince—a prince in disguise indeed, for his clothes were very shabby. He was tall and slight in figure, had long, fair hair, small, finely-cut features, and thin taper fingers. Nobody could guess exactly his age, but he could scarcely be more than twelve when for the first time he astonished the neighbours by being seen in Mr. Daniel's house. Many questions were of course put to the old organist about his young *protégé*, but

his curt, vague answers rather stimulated the general curiosity than satisfied it. All that could be learnt was, that the young boy was the son of a friend, who, on going abroad, had left his child with the old professor to be instructed in the art of music. After a time, curiosity was starved to death, and the presence of the child in the garden-house, became, like other things, a matter of course.

John did not go to school. He received all his instruction from Mr. Daniel, who was not himself a great scholar, but who had thought and observed much in his quiet life, and had read a fair number of books. The child helped his old master in the cares and labours of their little household. A woman came in every morning for an hour, to attend to small domestic matters, which would have fared badly without her, and this was all they had in the way of service. John used to get up and light the fire in the morning, and set the table for meals, the latter process consisting only of putting two mugs and plates on the corner of a table heaped up with books, music, and writing materials of all sorts. Mr. Daniel used to watch the boy with a meditative gaze. There was no waste of words between the two, and often hours passed in the old room without a word exchanged between them.

Having lived so long alone,. Mr. Daniel had grown into a habit of silence, and he opened his mouth only to say what was strictly necessary. Not many hours passed, however, in which the piano was silent, and its tones were a better link than common words between the soul of master and pupil. In John, Mr. Daniel had found at last a learner worthy of his art, and the boy very soon began to play in a remarkable manner. It was his greatest happiness, his sole amusement; and in summer, when the windows were open, solemn chords and sweet melodies stole out into the evening air, and seemed to linger and hover among the trees like white-winged messengers from a better world.

When he had played a long time, the boy would steal softly to Mr. Daniel's side, sit on a low stool beside him, and silently put his soft young hand into the dry, wrinkled one of the old man.

"When will they come back?" he would ask.

"My poor child!" said Mr. Daniel, stroking the smooth, fair hair. Generally this was all that passed between them at such times.

John was not disappointed. He loved his old master, and was used to his silent ways. He went on with his own thoughts and dreams as the darkness

deepened, his eyes fixed in winter on the leaping, flickering log fire,—in summer on the floating, fleeting clouds catching the colours of the departing sun.

And what was the true story of the boy?

He was the son of a Polish family, every one of whose members were ardent patriots. His parents, who belonged to the highest aristocracy of their country, had taken refuge in France after the failure of an insurrection which compelled his father to choose between death and exile. John had been born at Paris, and had passed a happy childhood, not darkened by any allusion to the sad events which preceded his birth. He showed from very early years a singular genius for music, and his mother, herself an admirable musician, took delight in cultivating this talent. When she thought that the boy's rare powers required more experienced training than her own, she engaged Mr. Daniel to give him lessons, being well able to appreciate the musical soul and science of the organist. The gentle, unpretending old man so won upon her confidence, that when she felt herself about to die, she made her husband promise that should his duties as a patriot recall him and his eldest son to Poland, he would leave John in the charge of Mr. Daniel, till he should be of an age himself to take

part in the struggle for his country's liberties and rights.

Not long after her death, the father found himself called upon to fulfil this promise. A new movement had arisen in Poland, and hope was springing up afresh in the hearts of the exiles. There could be no delay, and John's father and his elder brother, aged seventeen, set out once more for their native land.

"I cannot tell if I shall ever see my child again," the Pole had said to Mr. Daniel, as he committed John to his charge; "but I rely on your faithfulness and love for him."

"So long as my life lasts, he shall be safe with me!" replied Mr. Daniel, pressing the father's hand.

The Pole then placed with Mr. Daniel a sum of money sufficient to pay for the board and lodging of the boy for two years, and set off on his adventurous enterprise. John, who had but little idea of the perils to which his father and brother would be exposed, wept when they left him, but his childish sorrow was not embittered by any doubt of their safe and speedy return. As he had always lived with an invalid mother, who seldom liked to have him out of her sight, he did not find his life with the old musician as dull as it would have seemed to most children of his

age. He was at no loss for occupation, for he was passionately fond of reading, of study, and most of all of the piano. His father had sent with him to Mr. Daniel's a number of books, both instructive and entertaining, and this library was an unfailing resource to master and pupil. The long evenings of the winter were passed chiefly in reading. When the first breath of spring came—the first wafts of that soft, warm air, which seems to bring for a while a sense of delicious ease in idleness—John would spend many an hour at the open window, watching the young leaves and flowers, and listening to the sounds of happy life which came to him in the voices of birds and merry youngsters. The children of the big house used to play in the garden under the chestnut-trees with their myriad flower-lamps, and their ringing laughter filled John with dreams of a life more joyous than any he had ever known. But he had scarcely a wish to join them and take part in their games; on the contrary, he would have been rather alarmed had such a thing been suggested. He liked better to watch them at a distance, and to try to guess their names, and ages, and characters. There was one little girl among them who interested him particularly. She was called Blanche, at least that was the name he

heard very often, and to which she always seemed to answer. She was small, slight, fair like himself, her voice was clear and joyous, and he was sure she was kind, for he had often seen her throw a penny from the window to some poor beggar. Once she had even come out and given her own luncheon to a little ragged child who was passing by. Blanche became in his imagination his little friend and sister. He fancied she looked like his sick mother, whom he always remembered as the image of all that was good and beautiful. He used to tell Blanche all his secrets, and have long talks with her, but only in his own mind,—never aloud, so that anyone might hear. He almost wished that he could see her once ill-treated by her brothers or playfellows, so that he might run to her aid, overleap all obstacles, jump from the top of a wall—twenty or thirty feet high—into the midst of the astonished group, and overturn with a blow the boys who had failed to treat with due respect the little queen of all his thoughts. But such an occasion never offered. The children in the great house always seemed on happy terms with each other; Blanche never got into any trouble or needed a protector; and if she had, no doubt her own brothers, who were much bigger

and stronger than John, would have fought her battles for her.

One day John found himself quite close to Blanche on the path. She was carrying a portfolio full of exercise and lesson books, and her mother was walking with her to the school. John did not dare to lift his eyes as she passed so as to see whether she was really like what he fancied her to be. The moment she had gone by he was almost sorry he had been such a coward, and lost such an opportunity, especially as he heard her whisper to her mother, "That is the Polish boy, mamma; doesn't he look a little gentleman?"

How came she to know he was a Pole? Neither Mr. Daniel nor John had ever told anyone; not because they cared to conceal the fact, but because nobody took any real interest in them or their history. It must have been pure divination of the little lady Blanche; and John was so much pleased to find she had been thinking about him at all, that from that time he watched her even more attentively than before.

On days when Mr. Daniel was too busy with his lessons to take John for a walk, he used to tell him to have a good airing in the court, which was large enough for a meadow. There John used to walk

up and down for hours, listening to the merry shouts and laughter of the children playing in the garden behind the great house, and separated from him only by a wall. If now and then they came to play in the court, he was too timid to go near or attempt to join them, and always crept away to some quiet corner. Mr. Daniel had never cared for play when he was a child himself, and had no idea that it was a desirable or necessary thing for John. As soon as he came home he called the boy in for his lessons, and John always came at once, however much interested he was in watching the children's games.

So the days and weeks and months passed away, all alike, all uneventful. No news came from Poland. Mr. Daniel gathered from the newspapers, which he saw occasionally at the houses of his pupils, that the insurrection had been put down, and that its only result had been to press the yoke yet more heavily on the necks of the unhappy patriots. He could scarcely doubt that John's father and brother had perished, or had suffered the fate more terrible far than death, of being exiled to the frozen wastes of Siberia,—wild deserts peopled with patriot victims and martyrs. Many a time when he saw John so untroubled and quietly happy, Mr. Daniel blessed the

ignorance and trustfulness of childhood, which spared him so much agonising apprehension and suspense. He would let him remain as long as possible in this happy unconsciousness of sorrow, and when the truth must needs be told him, he would have gained strength to bear the blow. He was very careful, therefore, that nothing should arouse any uneasiness in the mind of the boy, who only expressed a passing surprise, sometimes, that no letters came from his father. So the weeks and months swelled silently into the years.

Little Blanche was growing quite a tall young lady; her elder brothers had gone to boarding schools, the younger ones began to have real studies at home. She used not to play so often as of old under the chestnut-trees in the garden; she might be oftener seen seated at the open window with a book in her hand. She liked that place, not only because it was so pleasant to look out upon the trees and flowers, but because such sweet sounds of music floated to her ears, as she sat there, from the little garden-house. But when winter came, the tones of the piano and of the harmonium ceased with the songs of the birds. Blanche began to wonder then what the poor lonely child could be doing behind the closed windows. She pictured him bending all day long over great, learned

books, studying in silence; in fact, she made quite a little poem in her mind, of which John was the hero. John, on his part, used to look across at the great house, and fancy the merry family party within, gathering round the cheery fire in the evening when the day's work was done; and in all his pictures Blanche was the fairy of the enchanted palace. Now and then the two used to pass each other in going in and out of the court, and then John had just presence of mind enough to lift his cap, but never courage to raise his eyes to her face. He was not sure that he would even have known her if he had met her anywhere else.

At length spring came again, for the fourth time since the young Pole had taken up his abode with the old music master. Once more the windows were opened to let in the fresh air and sunshine, once more the throats of the birds began to swell with song, and their melody to ring among the budding branches; but this year, above the music of the birds, there floated out upon the quiet evening air, sounds of more thrilling sweetness. They were the tones of a pure young voice, clear as a bird's, but full of the pathos of a human soul. They rose and rose and seemed to expand like a flower in the sun. Those who caught

the sounds stood spell-bound with emotion. It was a voice such as one hears in dreams often, but in real life scarcely ever. If any true lovers of music had lived in the court, they would have never rested till they had discovered who was the owner of so rare an organ; but those who did hear it were content with enjoying it just as they enjoyed the song of the nightingale. All through the summer the same voice sang on through the early hours of every evening. Who could be the singer? Some said it was the young fair-haired boy who lived in the garden-house, others said it was impossible such a volume of tone could come from one so young and slight. Blanche never doubted that it was he. They used to leave the windows of the great house open till quite late at night, to hear the enchanting music, but they soon found they must be careful not to show listening faces at the windows looking towards the little house. Whenever the young musician found that he had an audience, he used to shut down his window, however stifling the heat, and never open it again till he had finished singing.

The return of winter put an end to these artistic pleasures in the court. The singing went on, but only faint and distant tones reached the ears of the

listeners. It was a long, severe winter, and brought with it much suffering to the poor and aged. Want began to press heavily on the inmates of the garden-house. The money left with Mr. Daniel by John's father had long been exhausted. Mr. Daniel had lost many lessons lately, and no new pupils had taken their place. His resources were almost at an end. He must economise in every possible way, and, as the first step, the laundress who used to come in every morning was dismissed, and the poor old man tried to accustom his own hands to the little domestic duties he could no longer afford to have done for him. Without saying a word, however, John very soon took all these upon himself, and his young ingenuity made him much more successful than the old man in accommodating himself to their changed circumstances. His father would have been very proud of his brave-hearted boy, could he have seen him then.

One day, as John was carrying home some eggs and a little butter from the shop, he saw that Blanche was just coming out of the house with her mother, and that he could not help meeting them. His face grew very red, and he wished with all his heart he could sink into the earth rather than be seen just then, especially when the gatekeeper, who was indignant at

what he called the sordid avarice of the old man, exclaimed rudely, as John passed, "Well, Master John, I hope you have learned how to buy something for nothing! Let's see what the shopwoman has given you for the sight of your pretty face. It's a shame to see people so miserly, that for fear of being robbed of a farthing's worth, they will go to market themselves, rather than let poor folks get a living."

Blanche must have heard every word, John was sure, and he was vainly looking round for any means of escape from her eyes, when she and her mother stopped close before him, and a soft voice addressed him:

"We have often heard you sing, Mr. John, for I am sure it must be your voice we used to love so to listen to in the summer, when the windows were open. Do let us thank you now for all the pleasure you have given us."

John blushed, stammered out a few words in reply, and made his way towards the house as fast as he could, squeezing the butter tight in his hand in his flurry and excitement; but the kind voice of Blanche's mother sounded long in his ears, and the blue eyes of the little girl had rested upon him with so much gentleness, that he could not help feeling she was

his friend, and the glow of pleasure that filled his heart made him quite forget his vexation at the rough words of the porter.

John was not long in discovering that this winter a change had come over his old master. He scarcely ate anything, and was more silent than ever. In truth, Mr. Daniel felt that his strength was failing, and the thought filled him with alarm, not so much for himself, as for the future of the boy. At last, one morning he was too ill to rise from his bed.

"I have only one pupil," he said to John; "you must go and tell him not to expect me to-day."

But the next day he was no better, and could only just manage, with John's help, to drag himself into his old arm-chair, and sit there a few hours. John begged to go for the doctor, but the old man refused, saying with a sorrowful smile, "It is not doctoring I want, my boy. My sickness is old age, and for that there is no cure."

In this extremity John resolved upon a desperate venture. He would offer his own services as music teacher to Mr. Daniel's last remaining pupil, till the old man should have regained a little strength. When he made his proposal, he was met with a stare of blank astonishment, and then received a flat refusal. The

pupil was a young man nineteen years of age, and though of very moderate musical abilities, he would deem it an indignity to be instructed by a mere child. The mother, however, could not help noticing that the blushing, timid boy, who thus offered his services, had a face of more than common intelligence, and after a little consideration, she proposed that he should give some lessons to her younger son. This offer was joyfully accepted, a very low price was fixed for such an unpretending master, and the arrangement was made for two lessons a week.

The winter continued in unabated severity; in the little garden-house, slightly built and standing high and unsheltered, the frost crept into every room and corner. Morning after morning all the water in the house was turned to ice. The stock of coal was almost exhausted, the wood was all gone already. Mr. Daniel maintained that he was not cold beneath the scanty covering of his bed, but John could hear his teeth chattering, in spite of his efforts to conceal the cold shivers which ran all over him. Food was almost as scant as fuel. A little broth would have warmed and sustained the poor sufferer, but where was the meat to come from? Mr. Daniel had brought John up in the habit of paying for everything as he

got it, so that the idea never occurred to him of trying to procure anything on credit. At last a day came when there was not a morsel of anything in the house, and the payment for John's first six lessons was not to be made till the next day but one. How should they exist till then?

Ever since the morning Mr. Daniel had lain still and speechless, his eyes closed. His face was so deadly white, and so changed, that John was terrified, and scarcely dared to approach the bed. When he did gently stroke the old man's brow and hands, he found them very cold. Still, when he asked in a trembling voice if he felt worse than usual, Mr. Daniel shook his head. John brought the covering from his own bed, and spread it over the invalid. It was very small and much worn, but it was better than nothing. The evening before, as he was coming back from giving his lesson, he had seen warm woollen coverlets hanging for sale in the shop windows. There were plenty of all qualities and prices. Oh, if he could only go and purchase one! Alas! he had not even a penny for the daily bread they needed. Fasting is not easy to a boy of sixteen. Midday was past, and he had eaten nothing since the night before. It was hard to bear; little as he cared for his own privations,

compared with those of his faithful old friend and master, he could not help feeling the dull gnawing pain. Suddenly a new idea struck him. He started up, gently opened the door of Mr. Daniel's bed-room, and saw that he was, or seemed to be, asleep. Then closing it again without a sound, he put on his cap, and ran out into the court.

It was quiet and deserted. No face was looking out of any of the windows of the great house; there was no one at the gate, no one apparently in the lodge. So he slipped out, as he wished, unobserved. If any one had asked him, "Where are you going?" he might perhaps have felt his courage fail, and given up his plan.

Where was he going, through that chill, freezing fog? He did not exactly know himself. His one thought was to get as far as possible from the neighbourhood of the old house, where he might be recognised. He walked on and on, crossed the bridge over the river, threaded a maze of narrow streets, and at last found himself in a respectable quarter of the town, perfectly new and strange to him. The houses here stood a little apart. It was almost country; a melancholy sort of country, where the tall bare trees stood in straight rows, and spread out their thin arms, like

sign-posts; through the iron railings he could get glimpses of gardens formally laid out, which might look gay enough in summer, when the square, and oblong, and triangular beds were full of flowers, but which seemed fantastically dismal now, under the cold, black, fast-deepening winter fog.

John went a few steps into the court-yard of many of these houses, and then crept out again, dreading to be seen; and yet what was the use of his coming if he did not mean to be both seen and heard? Yes, proud, shy boy as he was, the desperate idea had come into his head that he might sing in front of some of these strange houses, and so pick up a few pence, to save himself and his benefactor from starving. At last he came to a spacious court, on one side of which were clumps of large evergreen bushes and fir trees. Creeping a little behind these for shelter from the wind, and from observation, he reasoned once more with himself—"Artists are never ashamed to use their talents to get money; why should I mind whether I sing in the open air or in a concert room? Ought I to be ashamed to take the money, just because we are so very poor?"

So with a brave resolve he began to sing a piece of Handel's. The first notes came hoarse and faint,

and he began to fear that the fog or his hunger had taken away his natural voice. But after a few bars, the tones grew full and strong, and he heard a window opened, and saw shawled and muffled figures leaning out in curious wonderment.

"It is a young boy's voice," said one.

"Oh, he must be so cold, mamma," said another child; "I can see him down there by the evergreens, and he has only got a jacket on."

"It is a splendid voice," said an older speaker; "but he won't keep it long, singing in the open air in this way."

It was too cold to keep the window open for more than a few minutes, but before it was shut, a little shower of pennies fell at John's feet. No one came out to ask who the young singer was, what drove him out in such a wintry afternoon, and why he could not use his gifts and earn money in a better and safer way. The children went back to their play by the warm nursery fire, and the elders to their work, leaving the stranger-lad to make his way as best he could through the wintry world without. So cold is charity in a great city.

But John's courage rose with even this measure of success, and he made several more attempts in the

courts of other houses, scarcely ever coming away without something added to his store of coppers. As it began to get dark, however, the windows were more slow to open, and the returns for his songs became more scanty. He was growing so tired, too, so cold and famished, that he could scarcely utter the clear joyous tones, which he had poured forth as easily as a bird, in the glad summer time. Still he wanted so much to add a little more to his hoard. If he could only get just enough to buy some bread on the way home, and the very smallest of those warm coverings he had seen in the windows, for his master's bed. Alas, poor boy! he knew very little of the price of things, or he would have given up this idea. But he was young and hopeful, and he would make at least one more attempt in front of the largest and most stately house he had yet passed. Surely, where money must be so plentiful, hearts would be large enough to spare a little for the needy. He had yet to learn the hard lesson that those who possess most pounds are sometimes those who hold the pence most tightly in their palm.

It was very dusk now, and just as he finished singing one of his most beautiful airs, he heard a rustling quite close to him, and two ladies passed rapidly, the

one tall and stately, the other small and slight. It was impossible to make out faces in the fog, but John felt a little hand touch his and leave a piece of money behind. What made him stop so suddenly, tremble all over, and feel the red flush burning his cheeks? He was sure those were not strangers to him; quite sure, though he had neither heard their voices nor seen their faces, that they were Blanche and her mother. He would have followed them had he dared, but he stood rooted to the ground, and they were already out of sight.

"Mamma," said the little girl, "I am quite sure who it was."

"You have better eyes than I have, but you might be mistaken, Blanche."

"Why, mamma, if my eyes were mistaken my ears could not be. I never heard another voice like that. Oh! I do wish you had let me give him half-a-sovereign instead of sixpence."

"It would have been very rash to do that, my child; for supposing it really was John, we ought to know first what makes him choose such a strange way of earning money."

"I am sure it is distress that has made him do it. Why, mamma, you know what a winter this has been

"TALE OF SONG AND SORROW."

Blanche and her mother pass the young musician, after he has been singing on a winter night.– *Page* 128.

for the poor, and we know the old man is ill. Oh dear, how could we let them suffer so close to us, and not try to help them! Won't you go in to see them to-morrow morning, mamma?"

"I will most gladly, Blanche, if they will let me. But, you know, if they are poor they are very proud, and I would not like to wound their feelings."

"How strange that we should just have been paying a visit at that house this very afternoon when he came. I expect he thought, so far from home, he should be sure not to meet any one who knew him."

"It certainly is strange," replied her mother, "and we will not rest now till we know more about the matter."

While this conversation was passing between Blanche and her mother, John was hurrying back as fast as he could towards home. He went out of his way to pass the shop where the coverlets were for sale, and found, with a pang of disappointment, that his earnings would not purchase even the smallest of all. He bought some bread, a little meat to make broth, and some coal, and then hurried home to kindle a fire. Mr. Daniel lay still in a sort of stupor, that seemed like sleep; he was not asleep, however, only so exhausted that he was powerless to move or speak.

He made no remark on John's long absence, and asked him no questions. Even when John with difficulty roused him to take a few spoonfuls of the broth, he did not seem to remember that he had eaten nothing since the day before. John wrapped him up again in the covering taken from his own bed, and, after warming himself as well as he could over the little fire, threw himself in his clothes on his mattrass, and lay there shivering and sleepless till morning. The remembrance of the day haunted him like a nightmare. As soon as he closed his eyes, great houses rose before him full of windows, which seemed to glare at him like evil eyes, and, when he was just dropping into a doze, he was roused up with a start by the tremendous effort he was making to clear his throat and sing. The room grew colder and colder towards morning, and as soon as daylight dawned he rose stiff and tired to light the fire again. He then stepped softly to the old man's bed, and in the cold, dim morning light the worn face looked more ashy and changed than he had noticed it before. He made haste to warm some broth for the invalid, tasting nothing himself but a piece of dry bread. His heart was very sad, and the thought of repeating the experiment of the day before seemed to choke him. He was sitting moodily at the table,

his head resting on his hands, and his eyes gazing steadily at nothing, when he fancied he heard a knock at the door. This was a thing so strange, so almost unknown in the little house, that he thought at first he must be mistaken. But the sound was repeated, and when John opened the door he found himself face to face with Blanche's mother. Her quick eye took in the whole circumstances at a glance. The empty grate, the bare bed of the boy, the old worn furniture, the music, the books scattered about—all told of poverty, suffering, honest toil; and John's pinched pallid face was a still stronger tell-tale. Through the half-opened door she could see the handful of smouldering fire in the old man's room, and before John could shut the door, she had caught a glimpse of the sick face on the pillow.

Seating herself on the chair John drew towards her, the lady spoke:—

"I have come to speak to you as a friend, if you will let me, John."

The boy could not answer, but his large eyes filled with tears. Such long unfamiliar words of woman's tenderness touched him to the heart.

"I hope you will not think I am curious or intrusive," she went on; "it is a real interest in you

and your old friend which has brought me here. Will you answer me one question first of all? Was it you we passed in the street yesterday afternoon?"

John did not need to answer. The hot flush mounted in a moment to the very roots of his hair, and Mrs. Prest—this was the lady's name—continued: "I am very sure that you need not be ashamed to tell me why we found you so strangely employed, but—"

"Madam," said John, starting to his feet, and speaking proudly; "it cost me more than I care to tell you to do such a thing, but I should have despised myself if I had let my old master starve, because I was too proud to help him in the only way I could."

"Do not think I blame you," rejoined Mrs. Prest, still more kindly. "I am only sorry you would have recourse to such means as that, rather than come and tell your trouble to us, who have so long been your neighbours, and who would have so gladly helped you."

John coloured deeply again, and, lowering his head, said, "I wished to *earn* the money, not to beg for it."

"Poor boy!" said Mrs. Prest with a sigh. "It was an honourable motive indeed. But, do you know, a very few weeks of such work as that would ruin your voice for life, and it is too precious a gift to waste."

John made no reply.

"Has Mr. Daniel seen a doctor?" asked Mrs. Prest.

"No; he would not let me call one in. I suppose he was afraid of the expense."

"I will send my doctor to him at once—that is the first thing; and whatever he orders shall be done."

So saying, Mrs. Prest rose to leave, and taking John's hand affectionately, said—"Do not be afraid; you shall earn enough to support your old friend without risking the loss of your voice by singing abroad in this wild weather."

When she was gone, John stood almost stunned with joy at the opening of a new door of hope contained in this mysterious promise.

Scarcely an hour had passed when a trusty old servant, who had spent a long life in the family of Mrs. Prest, and to whom she entrusted all delicate tasks, because of his unfailing kindness and tact, came across to the garden-house, bringing first a great bundle of blankets and coverlets, then some provisions, and lastly a large barrowful of wood, with which he soon made cheerful blazing fires in both rooms. The unwonted roar in the chimney, and the blaze of ruddy light falling on his face, made Mr. Daniel open his eyes.

"Some friends have been sent to us," said John, as soon as he saw the old man was aroused; and he pointed to the fire, and to the warm downy coverlet already spread on the bed.

"Ah!" said the feeble voice, with a deep sigh; "thank God. But——"

"But what?" asked the boy, leaning down to catch the broken whispers.

"If it is charity——"

Before John could tell the whole story Mrs. Prest entered, accompanied by the doctor. When she understood the old man's uneasiness lest he should be receiving alms, or incurring obligations he could never discharge, she assured him that all should be considered payment in advance for lessons which she wished John to give to her children.

Accordingly, the next day John entered on his new duties. Beside her own two little boys, Mrs. Prest found him another pupil in the neighbourhood, and for all these lessons he was to be paid twice as much as he had asked before. The pressure of want was thus at an end; and warmth, good food, and quiet of mind soon brought back cheerfulness and hope to the little home. Even Mr. Daniel's exhausted nature rallied to some extent under these happy influences, but not

enough to enable him to resume his lessons. This was not needful, however, for John could now easily earn sufficient to supply the modest wants of the little household.

John was happier than he had ever been before; he had full occupation and an object in life. The kindness he constantly received helped to remove his shyness. His little pupils loved him, and when he gave his lessons in the great house, Blanche often sat at work with her mother in the window, and now and then addressed a word to him in her silvery voice. Could he help being happy when she was near, and spoke kindly to him? Was it not to her he owed all his present happiness? He had been right when in his childish dreams he pictured her as a good fairy.

Gradually he was made welcome in the great house, not only as a music teacher, but as a friend and guest; and these were indeed hours of pure delight. He was careful, however, not to leave his old master much alone, and his evenings were almost always passed in reading or singing to him.

The cup of happiness is seldom half filled. One evening in the next winter, as John was seated at the piano, singing as usual, a knock was heard at the door. He ran to open it. A tall white-headed man, with a

face deeply lined by suffering and hardship, stood on the threshold. He looked for an instant at the youth, on whose face the light fell full from the lamp he held in his hand; and then, in a voice broken by the tumult of feeling, exclaimed—"My son!"

John, trembling all over, put down the lamp, took one long look into the stranger's face, and then flung himself into his arms, crying,—"Father, father! I knew you would come back!"

Old Mr. Daniel recognised the voice, which seemed to him like one from the dead, for he had long abandoned hope that John would ever see his father again. He was too feeble to rise and meet him, too overcome with joy to speak a word of welcome, but the warm pressure of the hand told all.

"You have been faithful indeed to your promise," said the Pole, with a beaming smile of gratitude as his eye rested on his boy.

"But where is my brother?" asked John, as soon as he could collect his thoughts.

"What, have you not heard? Have you had no news from us?"

"None since you went away."

"It is four years now since your brother fell on the battle-field, fighting bravely by my side. I could not

weep; death was better than exile to Siberian snows. He was your age, John, and so like you."

"Exile to Siberia!" repeated John in a voice of horror.

"Yes, to the land of heroes and martyrs, my boy. I will tell you another time what I have seen and suffered there, and how, through a kind Providence, I made my escape. But for to-night, let me try and forget that leaden sky and the broken hearts bleeding under it, and be happy with you both—as happy at least as a son of enslaved Poland can ever be. Tell me now all that has happened to you in these four years."

John's simple story and Mr. Daniel's was soon told, and then, forgetting his resolution, the exile began the strange recital of his four years of sorrow, suffering, and hardship.

"And now," he said at last, "I have come back, an old man before my time, feeble, crippled, penniless, almost blind, what will you do with me?"

John's eyes sparkled through tears. "Never fear, father; I will keep and comfort you both."

"Well, well, my lad, so you shall," he answered tenderly, laying his hand on the fair head of the boy who knelt beside him; "till your turn too comes, to fight and die for home and country."

Boys and Boys.

IT was a poor little school, in a poor little country village. The scholars were about thirty children from the scattered cottages around, most of them very young, for as soon as they were strong enough to work at all, and often before they had mastered the very elements of reading, writing, and arithmetic, they were sent to take their part in the poorly-paid labours of the field. Most of them wore the same scanty, shabby clothing from January to December; but they had fresh, smiling faces, and seemed to enjoy the sturdy health common to the hardy poor in country districts. There was one among them, however, whose pale, peaking face formed a contrast to the rest. He was the son of a poor widow, born after his father's death, and the straits of poverty had deepened the evils of a naturally delicate constitution. The mother, herself always ailing, had a sharp and constant struggle to keep actual want and

hunger from the door; indeed, little Michael was often hungry, and would have been still more so, if kind motherly women had not now and then given a meal they could ill spare to the white-faced fatherless boy. Even the near neighbours scarcely knew, however, how great the need often was in the widow's cottage, for Michael's mother was quiet and reserved, not fond of gossiping about her own affairs, or other people's; and, beside, she belonged to another village, and among the poor in the country this is often barrier enough to prevent very close acquaintance. Let a woman come from a distance of only ten or twenty miles, and she is apt to be regarded with some suspicion as a foreigner, and outlandish in her ways. Most of the people in the village, however, agreed in respecting Theresa, as a modest, inoffensive woman, and a hard worker. Only one family had been always ill disposed towards her, and these were unfortunately her nearest neighbours—the Lamberts—a noisy, unruly household, occupying the cottage adjoining hers.

In this family there was one boy of the age of Michael, who was the ringleader of all the mischief and disturbance among the younger lads in the village. Sturdy in frame, with great red cheeks, crisp curly hair, and eyes like sloes, Peter was as great a contrast

as possible to the wan, timid, melancholy Michael, and often amused himself with mimicking and mocking the woe-begone looks and old-fashioned ways of the sickly child. He was for ever in mischief, and bursts of rude laughter were generally his only reply when any one complained, or tried to check him. Once now and then his father took him in hand, and then the laughter was turned into piteous cries, as the heavy blows fell without mercy. For two or three days after one of these beatings, Peter would scarcely be able to drag himself along without groaning with pain. His mother contented herself with scolding at him in a loud tone from morning till night, and any neighbour who came by was told that there was not under the sun such an unruly boy as Peter. So Peter became the terror and by-word of all the village, and before he had reached his tenth year was utterly unmanageable and precociously wicked. Yet there was a germ of good in his wild nature, and under kindlier and wiser training, who can tell how different he might have been? Unhappily, there was no influence over him in his daily life to teach him self-restraint, kindness, or truth.

Even in Peter's heart, however, there was a voice that spoke to him sometimes of a better life. Now

and then, when he was out alone in the fields in the soft summer evenings, when everything was still and beautiful around him, there came into his heart, he did not know how or why, a wish that he was a better boy—a sort of sorrow for the past, and a new hope and desire. But when he got back into the village, and the boys began to tease and taunt him, and his mother called him in with something little better than an oath, the evil spirit came on him again; and to see and hear him then, no one would guess what he had been thinking just before.

It was natural that Michael, being his nearest schoolfellow, and the most defenceless of all, should come in for a large share of Peter's cruel tricks. There was never a kind word spoken of either Michael or his mother in Peter's home, so the boy knew he would not be likely to get into trouble with his father for spending his malice in that direction.

In one small window of their cottage Michael had a root of pinks in a pot, which was his great care and delight. One day, while he and his mother were both out, Peter took it into his head to pour boiling suds and water over the poor flower, which of course never recovered. Another of Michael's little pleasures was to make friends with the sparrows, by scattering a few

crumbs for them every morning before the door. As soon as they had become a little tame, Peter let loose a great cat upon them, till they were all frightened away. In short, Peter had become a perfect terror to Michael and his mother.

There were more serious sufferings and grounds of complaint than these in store for the poor boy before long. When he had reached his ninth year, his mother sent him to the village school, thinking that the walk would do him good, and the mixing with other boys would raise his spirits. One evening in autumn, when he was coming home in the dusk, his foot caught in a string stretched across the road between two trees, and he fell forward, striking his knee sharply against a large stone. The pain was so acute, that for a moment he was stunned, and when he recovered himself a little, and tried to get up, he found he could not. He lay there a long while, till his mother, growing uneasy, came in search of him. She took him up in her arms, and carried him home. His leg was not broken, but the blow had been so violent, that a tumour formed in the knee, and the poor boy could not leave his bed the whole winter. Michael bore his pain with great patience. His chief sorrow was that he could not go to school, for he was pas-

sionately fond of learning. His master, scarcely less sorry to lose his best and most attentive pupil, used to come in often in the evening to hear him read, and lent him books, which were the great delight of the poor little sufferer. He would read them over and over again, always finding fresh interest in the familiar pages. Sometimes he would read aloud to his mother while she worked, and he was astonished that the travels and marvellous stories had not the same charm for her as for him. She would smile, and try to look interested, but her remarks showed she had not been listening properly, and at such times Michael, afraid of grieving her if she saw his disappointment, would read and talk to himself again, in a low tone, over his books.

"You must not mind me, Michael dear," his mother said, after one of these unfortunate conversations about the stories; "you see I have my heart and my head so full of other things."

Then Michael threw his arms round her neck, and told her not to fret and be anxious about things. He would work for her when he was well and strong.

Well and strong! Ah! this his mother knew too well he never would be. But she did not wish to make him sad; so she kissed him warmly in return,

and only said, "If your poor father were but alive, darling, he would work for us both."

It was a pleasure to see Michael's face in the evenings when the schoolmaster came in. M. Dubuy knew so many things. He could explain to him the habits of plants and animals, and tell him about distant countries, and the strange people who lived in them. As he talked, a new wide world sprang up before the eyes of his eager listener, who for months had seen nothing in the actual world beyond the four bare, narrow walls of his room. Sometimes M. Dubuy would make Michael be story-teller, while he listened with more appreciative ears than the poor widow. He had once had a child of his own, who died at about Michael's age, and tender memories of his lost little son added something to his genuine interest in the poor suffering boy. In one of these evening talks, Michael was led into telling of some of the tricks and bad turns his troublesome neighbour had played him.

"And you will never persuade me," said Theresa, overhearing what passed, "that it was not that young rascal who brought all this trouble upon us. There is no other boy in the village who would be mischievous enough to stretch a cord right across the path where

people walk in the dark. Of course nobody can prove it, but I know very well where the blame lies."

Michael was as sure as his mother that Peter was the cause of all his suffering, but he said nothing.

That day M. Dubuy had brought a new book, which he left with Michael when he went away, saying: "That is a book of my own, Michael, I have brought you. It was given to me a long time ago, and I think you will like it."

Michael opened the little volume. It was a copy of the Gospel of Matthew. He began to read it to himself at once, at first with rather a dull, puzzled look, as if he could not quite understand it, then with more and more interest. His mother, who was busy about the house, scarcely noticed how long and steadily he was reading till he suddenly exclaimed: "Mother, see here!"

"What is it, my child?"

"Just see what it says in this book M. Dubuy gave me. It must have been written on purpose for us."

"Read it me, Michael; I can't read as easily as you, you know."

Michael began to read: "'Love your enemies.' Then, mother, we must love Peter Lambert, for he is our enemy, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Theresa, with a sigh; "but it is not easy to do so, Michael."

"No, I dare say not; and yet, mother, as soon as ever I read those words I seemed to feel in my heart—Yes, I will love Peter. I will try."

"You are better than I am, Michael," said his mother. "How can I love any one who has done you such harm, and made you suffer so?"

"Sit down by the bed, mother, and I will read you some more while you work."

So Michael began the chapter again, and read once more the blessed sayings of the Saviour. Even Theresa was struck and touched with some of the words, especially those: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." She made Michael read them twice over.

"This is the best book, after all," she said. "You shall often read to me out of this, Michael, if you like."

"Indeed, I should like; but, mother, do try and forgive Peter now; you said you never would, but you see that would be wrong."

"Well, darling, I will try; but it seems too much for a bad boy to do such a thing as that, and then that one may not even feel angry with him."

Two days after M. Dubuy came again to see his little patient.

"I have got a new scholar, Michael," he said. "Who do you think it is?"

"Not Peter, I hope;" exclaimed Theresa.

"Yes, Peter. His father came yesterday to ask me to take him. I wanted to know why he had kept the boy idling at home so long, so that at ten years of age he did not know his right hand from his left. He said it was quite time enough for him to begin to learn; that he did not care about his knowing too much, only just enough to carry him through the world without being 'put upon.' I don't know how much knowledge it takes to save a man from being 'put upon,' but I shall do the best I can with him as long as he is with me. I do not think the boy has a bad face; at any rate he has a straightforward look, which is more than can be said of his father."

"Ah, you'll soon find out what he is!" said Theresa, who could not yet conquer her old grudge against Michael's tormentor.

Michael cast a reproachful glance at her as she spoke.

April came at last with its bright rays and reviving showers, and Michael gradually gained strength enough

to get up and return to school; but he found he had for life at least one fresh infirmity—his knee-joint was stiff; he was lame.

The first time he came into the school after his illness, some of his comrades, already in their places, turned and looked at him pityingly; but the kind glances soon changed into shouts of laughter when they saw Peter, who had come up just behind Michael, imitating him exactly—his grave face and limping gait; the effect being rendered all the more comic by the contrast between the two figures—the one round and ruddy with health, the other tall, thin, and colourless from suffering. Michael had so looked forward to coming back among his schoolfellows that this unkind reception cut him to the heart, and made his eyes fill with tears.

The old schoolmaster came in soon after, and took his place. When he saw Michael there once more he came up to him, and laying his hand kindly on his shoulder, said, "Well, my boy, we are all glad, I am sure, to see you back again; but what makes you look so sad? Are you not glad to come yourself?"

Michael dared not try to speak, and his head dropped.

"If any one has been you teasing to-day, the first

time you have come back to school after five months' illness, he shall smart for it. Tell me, who is it, Michael?"

Still Michael was silent.

"Come, now, I am determined to know," said M. Dubuy, still more gravely.

"O, master, please don't ask me," said Michael, in an imploring voice.

M. Dubuy paused a moment, as if uncertain what course to take. Then he said, "Well, if you are so anxious to hide the offender, Michael, it shall be as you wish; but let him take warning; I will have no more of this."

Not in the least shamed by Michael's forbearance, or frightened by his master's anger, Peter went on with his mimicry the whole morning, whenever M. Dubuy's back was turned, and there was a constant titter of suppressed laughter among the boys. Michael kept his head down over his slate, and tried not to notice anything. M. Dubuy was much irritated by the disorderly behaviour of the class, but his eyes not being so good as they once were, he had no suspicion of the real cause of the mischief. At length, his patience fairly worn out, he turned half-a-dozen of the most disorderly out of the room. Peter was,

course, one of those expelled; and the punishment was very much to his taste.

Quiet was restored in the schoolroom after he was gone. In half-an-hour the morning studies were finished, and the rest of the scholars dismissed, to return home or play in the yard. M. Dubuy kept Michael behind to say a few kind words to him; and then he slowly followed his comrades out of the school. He was very tired with his first morning's work, and his leg was still painful when he walked, so that he moved carefully. Just as he came to a turn in the path he met Peter, who seemed irritated instead of touched by Michael's generosity towards him in the morning.

"There, take that," he said, "for your tears and tell-tale face. You shall have something to cry about this time;" and he hit Michael such a sharp blow on the head that he almost knocked him down.

"Oh, the coward!" exclaimed a voice behind the hedge.

Peter had thought there was no one in sight. He turned quickly at the sound of the voice, but could not see any one. Michael toiled slowly home, aching in head and limb. His mother noticed his pale, sad face, but she asked no questions, and Michael would

not grieve her by telling her his new troubles. Before he was ill he had been so happy at school, not only praised by his master, but beloved and kindly treated by his playmates; and it was a bitter disappointment to find it so different now.

After tea Michael sat down on the door-step to learn his lessons for the next day. He kept looking uneasily about him, fearing Peter might suddenly appear round the corner, and play him some trick, or give him another blow. Presently a long dark shadow fell on his book and on the ground before him. Michael looked up and saw M. Dubuy standing with such a grave face that the boy was quite frightened.

"That wretched lad struck you, Michael, and it was he who tormented you before school this morning. Tell me all the truth; I will know. Indeed, I do know. Some one saw him hit you on the head, and has told me the whole story. I will turn him out of the school."

"Oh, no sir; please don't," said Michael. "He will get worse and worse if you do. Perhaps if you keep him he will grow better."

"But do you think I can let him come and abuse you, the best of all my scholars, while he, little wretch, scarcely knows his alphabet, and never will. Oh, how

I should like to give him a good sound thrashing as he deserves!"

Just at this moment a loud, sharp cry was heard close at hand. Michael started up, and hurried as fast as he could into the house, pulling M. Dubuy in with him, and shutting the door.

"Oh, master," he said in a trembling voice, and trying to close his ears to the piercing sound, "that is poor Peter. His father is beating him again. Oh dear, what shall I do?"

"His father has come home tipsy, most likely," said Theresa, "and then he often treats Peter very cruelly." She spoke more quietly than Michael, very likely thinking that if the punishment was rather too severe, the boy deserved a good deal.

"But this is terrible," said M. Dubuy. "The man will kill the child."

"Oh, no!" replied Theresa; "but very likely Peter will not be able to walk to school for a day or two."

Still the cries went on, growing louder and more agonising. Michael began to sob, and even Theresa looked alarmed. "This is worse than usual," she said.

"I shall go in," said M. Dubuy, moving to the door.

"Oh, don't go, master; he will kill you too," sobbed Michael.

But M. Dubuy was already standing before the open door of Peter's home. The boy lay helpless and almost senseless on the floor; the wife was vainly trying to hold back the arm of her drunken husband. Both stood still in blank astonishment when they saw the schoolmaster. Lambert turned very white, trembled all over, and tried to hide himself behind the door. The woman looked cowed and sullen.

"Help me to lift up the poor child," said M. Dubuy, quietly stooping over Peter, and raising his head.

Seeing the schoolmaster treat the boy with kindness, almost with tenderness, the mother burst into tears.

"There is not such a miserable woman as I am in the place," she sobbed out. "To have a husband who only works when he pleases, who drinks away all that he earns, and stays out for days together! Why, sir, my husband had never been near us since yesterday morning, and now he comes home like a madman, and we are none of us sure of our lives. As for that boy, perhaps if he got a broken arm or leg, it might cure him of some of his tricks. It's me who ought to be pitied; nobody knows the life I lead."

"You have very little right to complain of your son, if you have not done all a mother could do to

make him better," said M. Dubuy. "Such treatment as this, and such a home, would ruin the best boy in the world. It is patience, and love, and gentleness he wants to cure him of his faults, not blows and broken limbs."

Such words were lost upon Mrs. Lambert. She went on sobbing, and muttering that she was the most wretched woman in the world, while M. Dubuy did what he could to make the poor boy comfortable and to restore him to consciousness. Then with a heavy heart he turned his back on this home of sin and misery.

As soon as he was gone, Lambert slunk out of the house, and was not seen again for two days. Meanwhile Peter lay in the bed, scarcely able to move. On the third morning he got up, dressed, and dragged himself to school, heavy-eyed, bruised, and tired. When he entered the room, the boys who were already seated in class began to nudge each other and whisper.

"He doesn't know, I guess," said one.

"I am not going to have him sit by me," said another.

And when Peter tried to take his usual place, he found that no one would make room for him, and was obliged to sit down alone on the back form.

"What's the matter with you all?" he asked in a half sullen, half angry voice.

"We don't care to sit beside a thief's son," replied one of the biggest boys.

"What's that you say?" cried Peter, clenching his fist; "say it again, if you dare."

"You don't know, then, that your father was taken up this morning for robbing Farmer Sawley as he was coming back from market the other evening. It was too dark to make out faces when it was done, so though there were a lot of the rogues, they were only sure of one, and that was your father."

"It's a lie!" shouted Peter, as all eyes turned on him.

"He'll have to show that in court," said one of the boys with a laugh; "he's a jail-bird safe enough now, at any rate."

Peter had a sickening sensation of fear in his heart that it might be all true, but he determined to put a bold face on it. Weak and stiff as he was, he hit a heavy blow to the first boy within his reach, and overturning the form, rushed out of the school just as M. Dubuy entered.

"What's the matter? what's all this?" he asked, with a look of astonishment at the disordered state of the room.

"Peter is angry at what we have been telling him," replied a chorus of voices.

"And what have you been saying to him?" asked M. Dubuy, who, not living in the village itself, was generally the last to hear the gossip.

When he heard how matters stood, he said sternly: "And weren't you ashamed, boys, to taunt the poor fellow with such a thing as that? Isn't it bad enough to have a wicked father? Ought you not rather to pity his misfortune?"

"We weren't going to sit by the son of a thief," replied the pitiless young Pharisees.

"Well," said M. Dubuy, "I should be ashamed if I were you to say such a thing as that. I had no great love for Peter myself, but now that I know more how the poor child has been brought up, I mean to help him, and to make a good man of him yet, if kindness and patience will do it. If you don't choose to be in the same school with Peter, any of you, you can go. I shall not turn him out."

Amazed at this unexpected turn of affairs, the boys remained silent and confused.

While this conversation was going on, Peter had run home as fast as he could. There he had found his mother wringing her hands and crying aloud, while

his sisters stood white and frightened. "Is it true then, mother?" exclaimed Peter.

"We are ruined, ruined every one of us," she cried. "Nobody will ever speak to us again. And just to think that it was all my saying he never came home that night that made them suspect him! And now they all say he is a thief, and nobody will put in a word for him. We shall all be starved to death. Oh dear, oh dear!"

While this miserable moaning was going on, Peter crept into a corner, sat down, and covered his face with his hands. He felt as if he would never dare to show his face in the village again. After a time his mother began to busy herself about the house, but she went on all the while bemoaning herself against her husband, her children, and all the world. His sisters had gone out somewhere. What should he do? He was afraid to meet the eyes of his schoolfellows again, afraid to hear them call him again the son of a thief, now he knew that it was true. At length he could bear his own miserable thoughts, and his mother's hard words no longer. He got up, rushed out of the house, and ran on till he came to a little path which ran through the corn-fields, with a hedge on each side. Here he thought nobody would be likely

to come, and he threw himself upon the ground, resting his head on his elbows, and began vacantly to watch the ants and other little creatures, creeping in and out, and sunning themselves among the blades of grass. He did not know how long he had been lying there; he only knew that he felt more unhappy than ever before in his life, when some one touched him gently. He started, and looked up into the pale, pained face of Michael, who had come up so softly that Peter had not heard a footstep.

"What do you want?" asked Peter, crossly. "I came here to be let alone."

"Come home with me," said Michael, trying to pull him up.

"What? to be taunted with being a thief's son again? Not I. Leave me alone, can't you. Why aren't you gone to school?"

"Because I have not been quite well," answered Michael. He had in truth been suffering from the blows given him by Peter. "I shall be going to school to-morrow," he went on; "we will go together."

"No more going to school for me," said Peter; and he crossed his arms in a determined attitude. Michael did not go away, but sat down quietly at a little distance, afraid of vexing him.

Presently he said—"Why, Peter, it would be a pity not to go to school, and learn some more."

"What do I care for learning?" Peter answered sulkily.

Michael was silent again. He saw how miserable Peter looked, and he did so want to comfort him, if he only knew how.

"Peter," he said, presently, "I wish you would love me, and let me be your friend."

"Friend?" said Peter, half mockingly; "I haven't got any friends, and don't want any." Even as he spoke, though, his voice trembled a little.

"But I love you, Peter."

"Who wants you to love me? Why should you? Because of that blow I gave you the other day, that made you ill, I suppose? Or because"—hesitating—"because I stretched the string across the road on purpose to throw you down? You did not know you had me to thank for that, and your lameness, did you, eh?"

"Yes, I knew," said Michael, quietly. Peter looked at him in amazement.

"How long have you known?"

"I was always sure it was you did it."

"Well, your mother does not know, then?"

"Yes she does. She guessed just as I did."

"Then I know she hates me."

"No, she doesn't, for she wants you to come and have some of our dinner to-day?"

"She will try to get it out of me, and taunt me with it?"

"No, she won't say a word to hurt you. She said to me this morning she was so sorry for you, and would like to comfort you if she could."

"Comfort me! What about?"

"About the great trouble that has come to you," said Michael, in a timid tone. He did not know how to say what he really meant.

"So you know about that, too?"

"Yes," said Michael, almost in a whisper.

Peter was quite silent a moment; then he started to his feet, and said—"You and your mother must be mad!"

"No, that is not what makes us feel so; it is because Jesus said: 'Love your enemies.'"

"Then I am your enemy," said Peter.

"You are not my enemy any more," replied Michael, putting his hand in Peter's, who did not shake it off as he would have done a few minutes before. They sat down side by side a little while, without speaking.

A slight air was stirring the hedges, and scattering all the sweet perfume of the May flowers. A lark rose every now and then, singing as he soared; most of the other birds were taking their noonday rest; but the air was full of the steady hum of insects. As the leaves fluttered, flickering changing patterns formed themselves upon the grass. The sound of the village clocks striking twelve fell upon the ear.

Peter was sitting with his head turned away, so that Michael could not see his features. Suddenly he burst into tears, and burying his face on Michael's shoulder, he sobbed out:

"Oh, Michael, how I would like to be a better boy! Do help me!"

Trusted and Tried.

ABOUT fifty miles out of Paris stood a beautiful country house, where M. Lassalles was accustomed to spend the summer with his family. It was a delightful spot, not indeed for the lovers of the picturesque or grand in nature, but for those who sought perfect quiet and pure country air. The view from the terrace of the mansion presented no striking features, and might even have seemed to some monotonous and dull. The land was very slightly undulated, and no hills worthy of the name broke in any direction the broad horizon line of sky. A background of woods, and in the foreground a river, the windings of which threaded the meadows like a silver ribbon,—now hidden behind a clump of trees or between deepened banks, now reappearing, sparkling in the sunshine,—these were the chief features that made the landscape pleasant to the eye. Here and there the tower of a village church rose above the

orchards, and herds of cattle were seen grazing contentedly in the broad meadows. On the side of the setting sun stood one solitary gigantic poplar, which commanded the whole country round, and towards evening cast far afield its great shadow, broken by the hedges and inequalities of the ground. When the sky was black with clouds, and the branches of the other trees were swayed and bent hither and thither by the storm wind, the poplar stood erect and unmoved. Once or twice it had been seen to bow and writhe in the tempest, but then it seemed as if it must be torn up by the roots, so stern was its resistance. This great tree suggested many curious questions and comparisons. What was it for? What was it like? Did it represent the wise man or the proud man? There it stood, solitary, useless, not even giving in its branches a shelter to the birds' nests. At a little distance from it, the apple-tree at the edge of the road cast its shadow over the heads of the passers by and its fruit at their feet. Which was best fulfilling its mission as a tree, the humble apple-tree or the proud poplar?

At the moment when we imagine ourselves to be peeping into M. Lassalles' park, the poplar was absorbing all the attention of one of the family, whose

acquaintance shall be the first we make. He is a little boy, scarcely nine years of age, with a thin, pale, sickly face, and large thoughtful eyes. At a little distance from the house, under the shade of a great lime-tree, he is lying, not on the mossy sward—that is a forbidden luxury—but on cushions which are brought for him every day to this his favourite place. He is alone, but surrounded with his books, one of which lies open on his knee, while the rest, scattered about the grass, seem to have been rejected one after another. He is not reading, but looking up steadily and long at the great poplar-tree. What is he thinking of or dreaming about? He would hardly know how to tell you himself. He is watching a little shrub, hardly visible from our distance, which grows close against the great trunk of the tall poplar. He is following with his eyes the long shadow of the tree, as it creeps round slowly with the sun, and is just about to swallow up the humble little shrub. Now it has crept on again, the shrub reappears, and the shadow stretches out longer and longer over the meadow grass. Richard turns away his eyes at length, and takes up his book once more, but you see he is not reading. The shadow which has left the bush seems to have come and settled on his face.

To look at this child, you would say he was a poor blanched plant that had grown up without any sun upon it. The sunshine to his life would have been his mother's love, but a mother's love he had never known. She had died when he was born, and with all he had beside to make him happy, there had always seemed something wanting, a blank which nothing could fill.

He had always been a delicate child, so delicate that it was only by great and constant care he had struggled through the troubles of infancy. He had never, indeed, known more than half the life of other children. The merry games, the wild adventures, the overflowing fun, the regular studies which healthy boys and girls enjoy, had always been beyond his strength. If he had had a mother's tender, caressing love at home, he might have been happy enough without all these things, but this had been denied him too.

Richard was not altogether alone, however. He had a father who loved him dearly, and a brother and sister both older than himself. But his father was much occupied, and could rarely spend much time with him. His brother went to school, and when he was at home, his rude, boisterous ways made Richard more afraid of him than glad to have his company.

Then his sister, though she was a kind-hearted girl, was brought up by a model governess, who allowed her very little leisure or liberty, but kept her very close to "her duties," as she called them. She had never any time to spare from her books and her piano to devote to her poor little sick brother, or to the ignorant children of the village, to whom a few crumbs of the knowledge with which Juliet was crammed would have been so useful. She had not even time to attend to the flowers in her own garden, and scarcely stopped to admire them.

Just as we are looking on, however, she came tripping up behind her brother, and said—

"Oh, how nice for you to be always out here in the open air, Richard! I only wish I was in your place."

"Well, stay with me then. Sit down here by me on the cushion," said Richard, making room for his sister, and holding her by the dress.

"Oh, I should like it so much, but you see I haven't a moment to lose. It is just going to strike four, and exactly at four I must sit down to the piano. Mademoiselle Leblois is awfully strict. Every hour of practising must be full sixty minutes long, and four hours of that a-day is enough to make a playing machine of me."

"Do you think there will be any pianos in heaven?" asked Richard, looking dreamily up into the sky again.

"I really know nothing about that," said Juliet, laughing; "and I don't trouble myself much about what people do in heaven. What an absurd idea, Richard! What ever makes you think of such things? I never should."

"I often think about heaven. I don't believe it's so far off as we fancy. Sometimes I feel as if living here is only like a dream, and I wish I could wake up."

"You have very odd ideas of another world. If you had as much to do as I have, you would know life is something more than a dream. But there's the church clock striking. I must rush into the schoolroom."

"Come back when you have done."

"Oh, yes, I dare say; and what about my lessons for to-morrow, then?"

"Well, well, go away then," said Richard, a little pettishly; "you never can stay with me."

Juliet ran off, and the great poplar went on lengthening its shadow over the field. Richard had fallen back into his waking dream, which nobody seemed able to understand. He looked at the tiny, feeble

shrub, and felt a sort of sorrowful pity for it, such as children do feel sometimes for things without life; though he scarcely knew it, he was really thinking of the shrub as if it were part of himself.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE Richard was lying on the terrace, M. Lassalles was busy in his kitchen-garden and forcing-house; not that he prided himself very much on the rare fruits and vegetables he could grow, but that he found gardening the best refreshment when his mind was jaded with the cares of business and of home. His family gave him much anxiety. He saw Robert, his eldest son, growing up idle, selfish, insubordinate; Juliet, so absorbed in her studies, that she forgot everything beside; and Richard, the most gifted of his children in heart and mind, sickly, melancholy, and reserved. He scarcely knew what means to use to change all this, and he found the best diversion to his over-burdened mind in his garden. There, at least, was a remedy for what was wrong; if a stubborn branch refused to yield and be trained in the required direction, the gardener was at hand with the pruning-

knife to cut it off. Anselm, the gardener, took a great pride and delight in his work, and M. Lassalles used to like to watch his untiring industry and skill in transplanting, grafting, pruning, training. The kitchen-garden lay outside the park, at a little distance from the house, on a gentle slope with a southern aspect, very favourable for the ripening of the fruit. It was enclosed with a high wall, and entered on one side by a large iron gate, opposite that which led to the house, and on the other by another little iron gate let into the wall, which was always kept locked, because it was only divided by a ditch and a little strip of grass from the main road. The gardener always carried the key of this entrance in his pocket, and only used it when he wanted to go a shorter way into the village. No one else was allowed to come in that way at all. Indeed, Anselm kept guard over his garden better than the dragon in the fable protected the garden of the Hesperides. His little house stood close by, and no one, not even his master, could enter the garden without Anselm's consent. He had no objection to allow visitors of a ripe and respectable age to come and admire his fruits and vegetables; but he had an insurmountable aversion to children, and an unbounded horror of the depredations, rapine, and

misdemeanours of all sorts of which he held them capable. Indeed, he had proved to his cost that Robert never entered the garden without leaving traces of his presence in some damage done; and it was probably his fault that Anselm had come to regard the admission of a party of schoolboys into a well-kept garden as the most ruinous of invasions.

"What is that I see yonder, Anselm?" asked M. Lassalles, looking in the direction of the little open gate in the garden wall. "Is it a child?"

Anselm turned sharply round in the direction pointed out, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Aye, that it is, sir—the little vagabond! But I'll make him take to his heels. I want no boys about here."

"Well, but what harm is he doing you? He can't possibly get in, and I won't have you throw that stone at him," said M. Lassalles, seeing that Anselm had stooped to pick up a stone to aim at the boy's head. "He can't do any mischief by resting a little on the grass outside the gate."

As he spoke, M. Lassalles went softly towards the gate, to observe the little fellow more closely without being himself perceived. The boy was eating a piece of bread, which, from the trouble it gave him to bite,

seemed very hard; and, to give a little flavour to the dry morsel, he was at the same time crunching some very small sour apples, which he picked up from the grass beside him. He had seated himself with his back to the road, and his legs hanging over the ditch; and, from the direction of his head, M. Lassalles could see his eyes were fixed on a fine pear-tree planted at the corner of the garden, and which stretched its laden boughs over the wall, as if to invite the passer-by to pick the scented fruit. Certain that the boy had not yet seen him, M. Lassalles stepped a little back, so that he might watch unobserved what would follow. He never doubted that the child would yield to the temptation, and only wondered he had stopped so long to think about it. He was surprised, therefore, to see him presently move his position a little so as to reach a few more of the unripe apples, and go on eating them as he had done the others, not without a little twitching of the face at their sharpness. Then M. Lassalles got from Anselm the key of the little gate, and opening it quickly, stood beside the boy, who had half turned his back to the garden, and was still diligently munching away. He seemed neither frightened nor surprised, and this made M. Lassalles still more sure of his honesty of pur

pose; he got up as he saw the gentleman, and bowed politely.

"What are you doing there, my lad?" asked M. Lassalles.

"I was stopping a little while to rest and eat my bread," answered the boy, not at all confused.

"Should not you have liked something better to eat than dry bread and green apples? Why did not you pick one or two of those fine pears you saw hanging there?"

"Because they are not mine."

"But if they were given you, would you eat them?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, come with me, and I will give you your pockets full."

Anselm stood in consternation as he saw M. Lassalles bring the little vagabond into the garden, and actually pick him a pocketful of the finest pears; and then, instead of sending him off again, stand and talk to him.

"Your feet are all cut and bleeding, my child," he said, looking down at the bare feet; "where have you come from?"

"From Sordy, sir."

"From Sordy?" repeated M. Lassalles, who had

never heard the name; "where is that? is it far away?"

"Yes, sir; I have been walking as far as I could every day for ten days, and I want to get to Paris the day after to-morrow."

"The day after to-morrow!—why, it's more than forty miles from here."

"I can go a little further to-night, sir."

"And what are you going to do in Paris?"

"An aunt of my mother's lives there, and I am going to find her."

"And where is your mother?"

"She died, sir, a month ago," replied the child, in a low voice, and looking down as he spoke at a little bit of brown crumpled crape, which was tied round the cap he held in his hand.

"And have you no other relations?"

"None, but this aunt, sir."

"And that made you think of going to Paris, I suppose?"

"My mother, before she died, told me to go. She thought my aunt would take care of me for her sake, and that I might be of some use to her when I had learned a trade."

"And do you know your aunt's name and address?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy, bringing out of his pocket an old, well-worn pocket-book. From this he took a letter, the address of which was almost illegible, so feeble and trembling had been the hand which wrote it. M. Lassalles made it out with difficulty.

"My boy," he said after a time, "you will certainly never find your aunt by this address; this is one of the streets which have been pulled down. How long is it since you heard from your aunt?"

"Five or six years, or more than that, sir, I think."

"But she may have died in that time, or moved half-a-dozen times over."

"I shall be able to find out where she is gone," said the boy.

"Do you think Paris is like your village, then, where everybody knows everybody? Paris is an immense place, my lad, and any one moving from one part to another, is lost sight of directly. Come up with me to the house, and we will see if we can get any more light on this matter. If we can you shall go on to Paris. What have you in that parcel so carefully tied up?"

"A shirt, a pair of trousers, my books, and my shoes, sir."

"Shoes, eh! Why don't you carry them on your feet, instead of in your hand?"

"My mother taught me never to put them on to walk in."

M. Lassalles smiled.

"And your books, where did you get them from? From the village-school, I suppose. Were they your prizes, my boy?"

"No, sir; I never went to school. My mother taught me all I know."

"And what do you know?"

"I can read and write a little."

M. Lassalles now became quite silent, and walked on, just as if he had no companion by his side, till he entered the park, followed by his little *protégé*. Going up to a door, which led to the kitchen-offices, he led the boy into a room in which the servants took their meals, gave orders that some bread and meat should be given him, and that a bed should be got ready for him, and then went away again. The first thing the little fellow did when he found himself alone was to go to the window, that he might gaze in wondering admiration at the great trees in the park, the bright velvet turf, and dazzling beds of flowers. As he was looking all around him he descried Richard on the grass under the lime-tree, and wondered to himself what the poor, pale, motionless boy, surrounded by

his books, could be doing. Richard happened at this moment to look up to the window of the servants'-hall; he raised himself on his elbow, astonished to see a strange face there, and the eyes of the two children met. Richard beckoned with his finger, and the young stranger replied to the sign at once by leaping over the low window-sill on to the grass, with so much agility that he did not even touch the flowers and shrubs growing in the border underneath the wall. In the twinkling of an eye he was by Richard's side, who, far from seeming alarmed at such a strange introduction, looked at the boy with pleased surprise.

"Who are you?" he asked, as soon as they were side by side.

"My name is James Valmy. What is yours?"

"I am Richard Lassalles. But how did you get into the house?"

"A gentleman took me in—a very tall gentleman, with grey hair. Do you know him?"

"That must be papa. Where did you meet him?"

James told the whole story—how he had been stopping to rest and refresh himself by the garden-gate, and what had followed.

"It must have been papa," repeated Richard. "But do you like sour apples?"

"No; but they are better than nothing."

"Better than nothing? Have you no money then?"

"Oh yes, to be sure I have; but I was keeping that till I got to Paris, so as not to be too burdensome to my aunt, if she is poor. You can always find kind people by the way, who will give you a crust of bread, and often let you sleep in their barn beside."

As he said this the boy showed Richard two two-franc pieces (about 3s. 6d.), which he had carefully wrapped up in paper, and some loose coppers which he had in his pocket. Richard, who had more gold pieces than that in his purse, did not seem to think very much of such treasures.

"Have you come far?" he asked.

"From Sordy. I dare say you have never been there, but it is quite a large village."

"As if I could know all the villages in France! But what Department is it in?"

"In Vienne."

"Why, that is a long way off."

"Yes, I have been walking ten or twelve hours a day for several days. Sometimes I missed my way, and then I had to turn back; at other times I was so tired that I was obliged to lie down by the road-side and sleep awhile, before I could go on."

Richard, who had been greatly interested in the story of his new companion, now looked down at his feet, and saw they were all dusty and bleeding. He noticed, too, how brown his face looked, and what old clothes he had on, and then said, with a deep sigh—

"You are a happy boy!"

"Ah, no," said James, "not since I lost my dear mother."

"Have you lost your mother? So have I," said Richard. "And you see I cannot walk; I can hardly take a step by myself."

"Oh dear, what a pity!" exclaimed James, looking at him in sorrowful wonder.

"No," Richard said again; "I can't even get from here to the house without help."

"Oh, I *am* sorry!" said James, as he glanced at the little shrunken, useless limbs lying on the cushions.

"You won't make fun of me," Richard said. "I am sure of that. My brother often makes fun of me, because I can't walk."

"Oh, how cruel!" said James, who could scarcely find words to express the pity he felt. "But what is the matter with you?" he went on, seeing Richard

was trembling from head to foot; "you look as if you had the shivers."

"I am so cold. I should like to go in, but there is no one to carry me. Papa is in the garden, and Louis is gone out; and they are the only ones who know how to lift me."

"I wish I could. Will you let me try? I am very strong."

"Yes, if you like; but you must take care. If you touch my back you will hurt me dreadfully."

James, though he was tall and as slight as a reed, was very strong in the arms. He stooped down, and raised the poor boy so gently that Richard felt perfectly safe as he clung round the neck of his new bearer.

"Go in by the middle door," he said, as they came in front of the house.

James walked in the direction pointed out, ascended some stairs at Richard's direction, till he found himself at the door of an elegantly furnished dining-room. No one was there, and Richard said, "Put me down on that couch in front of the French window."

James had just carefully laid down his burden when a side door in the room opened, and a youth about his own height, with a quantity of very curly black

hair, and an unamiable expression of countenance, entered, carrying a horsewhip in his hand.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, stopping short in the doorway; "what is this young beggar doing here? How dare you come into the house?"

"Robert," cried Richard, in terror of his brother's temper, "pray don't speak to him so. He only came to carry me in. Papa brought him to the house. You ought not to insult him."

His pleading was vain, however. Robert, seeing that the boy did not move, and seemed in no way intimidated by his presence, went up to him and struck him a blow right across the face with the horsewhip.

"Oh, Robert! you wicked, wicked boy," cried Richard, with a burst of tears.

At the same instant James stretched out one of his strong arms, and with scarcely an effort snatched the horsewhip out of Robert's hand.

"You have no right to strike me," he said; "I have done nothing wrong, but I will not stay here another minute."

So saying, he threw the horsewhip far out of the window, and before Robert had recovered from his surprise, he had run out of the house, and was hurrying towards the park-gate.

CHAPTER III.

RICHARD'S eyes followed his new friend with a look of consternation. He could not call him back—he could not go after him. What should he do? His trouble at the loss of his little friend made him forget his anger, and he turned imploringly to Robert.

"Oh, Robert! do pray run after him, and tell him you are sorry, and bring him back! He *must* not go away so."

"Say 'I am sorry' to such a fellow as that!" exclaimed Robert, in a mocking tone. "A likely thing indeed! If ever I meet him again I will let him know I'm sorry I didn't give him a kick to make him run a little faster. I owe him that—more's the pity."

"How dare you say so?" said Richard, indignantly.

"How dare I? What do you take me for, you babyish boy?"

"You insulted him, and hit him; but he threw your whip out of the window. He had all the honours of the war," said Richard, triumphantly.

"Little monkey!" cried Robert, whom these words stung to the quick, "I'll teach you to bridle your

saucy tongue. How I should like to give you such a thrashing as you deserve, if ——"

"If what?" asked Richard.

"If you weren't such a feeble, chicken-hearted little creature," Robert replied.

The blow told. Like most delicate children, Richard was extremely sensitive on this point; and thought nothing so much to be envied and desired as bodily strength. He was for ever contrasting Robert's big limbs and strong health with his own puny, sickly frame, and the contrast might have been enough to prevent their understanding each other, or having much in common, even if Robert had been far more amiable than he was.

"You are a coward," said Richard, flying to this objectionable word as the last resource of the weak against the strong.

"A coward because I won't strike you, little one? I ——"

"Come, come, boys, what, quarrelling again?" said M. Lassalles, who had come in unobserved, as the last high words were spoken on either side. "What made you call your brother a coward, Richard?"

Richard told the whole story; and while he did so Robert turned his back, and began to whistle. M.

Lassalles took no notice of this disrespectful proceeding, for he was thinking only of the disappearance of the boy, who had interested him greatly. Before he left the room, however, he turned to Robert, and reproved him severely for such conduct to the unoffending lad.

"How should I know that beggars were to be allowed here?" Robert replied, rudely.

"He is not a beggar," exclaimed Richard; "he is on his way to Paris to earn his living honestly, and if he had asked for a bit of bread by the way, I don't see anything to be ashamed of in that."

"How much eloquence you waste on the subject!" said Robert, scornfully.

M. Lassalles had left the room without another word. Mademoiselle Leblois and Juliet soon entered.

"How you smell of the stable!" said Juliet to her eldest brother, at the same time taking out a scented handkerchief, and holding it to her nose. "Couldn't you at least wash your hands before dinner? I assure you such odours are anything but pleasant in the dining-room."

"I may surely dare to offend your sensitive nose, Miss Affectation, since you offend my ears all day long with your incessant rattling on the piano."

"How rude you are, Robert!"

"I tell you what it is, Miss Juliet, when I am at home a few weeks from college, I am not going to be set upon by a pack of women and children like you. What harm have I done you, I should like to know? Tell me if you can. I can tell you what use girls are—none at all but to bother other people."

Juliet tossed her head contemptuously, without once raising her eyes from her work.

Mademoiselle Leblois, who seldom ventured to interfere at all with Robert, thought she might venture at least a suggestion.

"Perhaps it would be as well if you were to brush your hair and your clothes before M. Lassalles comes in," she observed.

"No, thank you, mademoiselle. I intend to remain as I am."

Mademoiselle gave one glance at him as he was—his hair almost standing on end, his hands of very doubtful cleanliness, his necktie hanging loose, his clothes covered with stable dust and bits of straw (for he had been filling the mangers to amuse himself); she sighed, shook her head, but said nothing.

A servant entered at this moment, bringing in some letters and newspapers, which he laid upon the table.

"Oh, now I can see about the races," exclaimed Robert; "there's something exciting in that, at any rate," and he tore open the paper.

"Are there any letters for me, Robert?" asked Juliet.

"You can look for yourself. It really makes me feel ill to look at the letters young ladies write to each other. Here, take them all!"

He threw them all at his sister as he spoke. She caught some, the others lay scattered about on the sofa and the floor. There was one for her, which she opened, and less critical eyes than Robert's might have been alarmed at the number of small closely crossed sheets which emerged from the envelope.

Robert glanced over the sporting news, which was all that interested him in the paper, and went out to report to his confidential friend, the groom.

While he was absent, M. Lassalles returned and dinner was served.

"I have brought back your little *protégé*, Richard," said M. Lassalles, after an interval of silence.

"*My little protégé!*" Richard repeated, inrather a sorrowful tone, as if to say, "I wish I could protect anyone, but I always need somebody to protect me."

"Ah, that little beggar, you mean," observed Robert, who had by this time joined the party at table.

"I have promised him he shall not again be insulted in my house," M. Lassalles went on, not noticing Robert's remark, "and that as long as he stays here he shall earn his own bread honestly. He is to work under Anselm in the garden, and will only come up to the house when he is sent on an errand."

"I am sorry for him then, that's all," said Robert, "for Anselm is about as amiable as a bull-dog. What a cat and dog life they will lead!"

"Poor James!" said Richard, with a sigh. Glad as he was that his father had brought James back, his little dream of having him with him, to carry him and keep him company, was at an end.

CHAPTER IV.

THE weather was glorious for the time of year. For three days Richard had stayed out of doors, under the lime-tree, almost from morning till night. Sometimes he would read, sometimes make stories of his own in his head, sometimes dream away, scarcely knowing how the time passed, till he saw the poplar

shadow growing long across the grass. The time of the singing of birds was gone, and there was no longer the summer sound of humming insects, or the soft whispering of the wind in the long meadow grass as before the mowing. All this pleasant music of the month of June had given place to the silence, by which the country seems preparing in autumn for the long death of winter. The farm was situated at some distance from the castle, and the sounds of creature life and of busy labour could not be heard in the park. Nothing broke upon the stillness but the monotonous tones of Juliet's practising.

Richard was never very fond of music, and the incessant sound of the piano jarred upon his nerves, and worked him sometimes almost into a fever of impatience. He wanted to listen to the silence, and the rattling noise disturbed him. Oh, if he could only get up and walk away out of reach of it. How he envied those who had the free use of their limbs. He turned his face towards the wooded side of the park, which he had only once passed when they were driving back to Paris. Between the little elevation which was crowned by the wood and that on which M. Lassalles's house stood, lay a fertile, well-watered valley, which went widening out till it closed with the

slightly undulating hills of the horizon line. At one end of this valley stood the poplar. No other large trees were near, but a tiny trickling stream, often lost in the grass, bathed the roots of some dwarf willows, which bent down their light flexible boughs to the water's edge. Richard was always longing to get to this stream. He wanted to hunt among the long grass for some of the great blue forget-me-nots, such as his sister had once brought him. He longed to cut one of those soft willow wands with his pocket-knife, and peel off first the leaves and then the bark, and make shrill white whistles for himself. With any other boy, to will would have been to do, but what was the use of his wishing? Even such a simple pleasure as this was beyond his reach. Yet he could not tell what was the matter with him, his limbs looked like other children's, only rather more white and thin. He suffered no pain, nothing to make him feel how weak he was, till he tried to move. Yet he could not, try as he would, raise himself up and walk alone, even such a short way as to that stream, which seemed to him to flow in a little paradise, and which he had so often watched with longing eyes. Richard had read many times in the Gospel of the miraculous healing of the halt and maimed. Many times, too, he

had asked God, before he went to sleep, that he might wake up in the morning and find that such a miracle had been wrought upon him. But it had never come, and the useless prayer had fallen back like a lump of ice upon his heart, freezing it towards the God who would not hear. He had not told anyone about these prayers and his disappointments. Perhaps if he had, some one might have explained to him that God often wants to bring us to accept His will, before He delivers us from the trial which He has sent for our good. Or, perhaps, he would have been laughed at for his simple faith, and the trusting heart of the child would have been yet more fretted and chafed.

Richard was thinking of all these things, when a voice close by him made him start.

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

Richard turned, and saw James standing at his side, holding in his hand a splendid peach wrapped in two vine leaves.

"Why, James, is it you? I thought you were never coming to see me any more, and yet you knew I could not go to look for you."

"Master Anselm never gave me leave to come till to-day."

"And how do you get on with Anselm? Don't you find him a great bear?"

"He shows his teeth more than he bites," said James. "I soon found that out. Rough spoken people are not always bad at heart. See, he gave me this peach, which I have brought to you, because I thought you would like it. He said, 'You can have it; they have got enough up at the house, and it will be rotten by to-morrow,' and he almost threw it in my face. 'But don't you want it, Master Anselm?' I said. 'I should have kept it if I did, boy. Come, now, you needn't stand there looking at it; you never tasted such a peach in your life, I can tell you, and I ought to know, for I reared it, and ripened it.' 'I thought it was God who made the fruits grow and ripen,' I said. 'Of course, you stupid boy; but don't you think God lets us have a hand in it, too? It would never have grown like that without my care.' So saying he walked away, but turned back again to say, 'If I had once seen you so much as look at one fruit on the tree, I should have given you another sort of treating from this, I can tell you.' You know old Master Anselm, Mr. Richard?"

"Very little; I have always heard that he is very churlish and rough, so when he comes into the park

I pretend not to see him, or only just say good morning."

"Then that's why he says you are so proud; I told him you were not, but he would not believe me."

"And do you find it very bad to live with him?"

"Oh, no; I like it. He is so lonely and dull at nights. I think, if he once begins to love me, he will be happier. Is there nothing I can do for you now, Mr. Richard?"

"Oh, yes," said Richard, afraid his companion was going to leave him. "Sit down here by me, and I will tell you. I am not going to eat your beautiful peach all by myself; we will have it between us, and talk while we eat it."

While they were despatching the delicious fruit, Richard showed James the low meadow where the osiers grew, and told him how much he wished to go there.

"Is that all?" replied the other lad. "I can easily carry you there."

"Oh, I am sure you couldn't."

"Why not? Never you fear; I won't let you fall."

"But I am a great deal too heavy for you."

"You heavy?" said James, with a smile, glancing at the little wasted limbs. "Why, I could carry twice your weight."

"But perhaps Anselm will scold if you stay."

"Oh, he is gone down to the village. He told me to dig up one bed, but I can do that this evening, after work hours. Now, then, let's go. Nothing venture, nothing have. Put your two arms well round my neck. Now, then, up! Are you all right? I will hold fast, and so do you. Does it tire you to clasp your arms round my neck?"

"Oh no; I have more strength in my arms than in my legs."

"All right, then; here we go."

They went quickly down the slope which led to the osier-bed, but it took a good while to get to the place, though James strode along as fast as he could. Richard laughed, half in pleasure, half in fear, at being thus rapidly carried on James's back. At length they reached the desired spot. James laid down his burden upon the grass, wiped his forehead, and then, taking off his coat, spread it on the ground for fear Richard should find it damp. When he had settled him comfortably on this new sort of carpet, he said, "Now, here we are; what would you like next?"

Richard looked around him with great delight. He was close to the tall poplar, and its shadow just reached his feet. He could almost count the leaves

of the poor little shrub he had so often looked at from a distance. Presently he asked James to go and find him some forget-me-nots by the water's edge.

James could not find any, however, for the season was over. He searched in vain all up and down the banks. He could find nothing flowering but some meadow-sweet, growing in the midst of a clump of reeds. He next gathered a quantity of the long flexible osier boughs, and began to carve them skilfully with his penknife, cutting the soft bark away in all sorts of fanciful figures. Then he handed Richard the pretty wands, all covered with green and white patterns, and Richard was never tired of admiring.

At length, after a long silence, during which Richard had been looking about him dreamily, he said, with a sigh, "James, I almost wish I had never come here. This always seemed to me like a bit of enchanted land, where I should discover all sorts of marvellous things if I could only get to it, and now I have come and seen it, after all, I find it is like other places."

"You could see from where you were that there were only trees and grass, and a little water here," replied James, laughing.

"Yes, but I used to fancy all sorts of marvellous

flowers growing out of sight. Are you never sad, James?"

"When I think of my mother I am, but I should not be sad if I were like you."

"Not sad if you were like me? if you couldn't walk, like me?"

"No," said James, very decidedly; "for then I could learn, and I should like that very much."

"Learn what?"

"Oh, all the things there are in those beautiful books that you always have by you."

"You don't know how to read, then?" asked Richard, in surprise, for he almost thought people learned to read as they learn to speak.

"Just a little I do, but it takes me a long while to get down a page, and sometimes, when I get to the last word in the sentence, I have forgotten the first."

"Well, you shall come and read to me half-an-hour every day, if you like, till you can read quite easily."

"Oh, thank you," said James, with sparkling eyes. "Now I will go and get some more willow boughs, and you shall see what I can do."

He got up and ran from tree to tree, choosing out boughs of exactly the same size. Richard followed his movements with curious delight. Far from being

envious of his activity, and strength, and nimbleness, he liked to watch him, and the thought that he could teach something to a being so superior to him in other respects, that he could make James a sharer in a good he did not yet possess, gave the crippled child a sense of satisfaction which reconciled him to his lot. James was, as we have said, tall, slight, and thin; he was a well-made, striking-looking boy. Without really regular features, his face was pleasant to look at; his large, soft, dark eyes were perfectly frank and truthful, and at the same time bespoke a quick intelligence. He had that native dignity which comes from a good conscience, and an earnest desire to do right. How many fathers would have been proud of such a son! But he, poor lad, had no father to be proud of him, no mother to love him!

When he had found all he wanted, James sat down again by Richard's side, and tried to make a basket, as he had seen the basket-maker do in the village. Richard meanwhile stretched himself out on the grass, and rested his head on James's knees.

"Oh, how nice this is!" he said, with a sigh of satisfaction. "I can fancy we two are alone in a little boat, in the midst of a great sea, with no shore to be seen on any side. It is so still—so still—that we

cannot feel any motion of the waves. And we are so happy that we do not even wish to float near to land, or to discover one little sail on the horizon. We look up, and there over our heads is the great, deep, calm, blue heaven; it seems as if we might go up, and up, and up for ever. And below us is the deep, deep sea, without a bottom or a shore."

Richard spoke so gravely and earnestly that even James was for a little while carried away by his words, and they both fancied they were out on a charmed ocean, being drifted along by the quiet waves, like a raft in a current.

They never noticed how the time was passing, and the last rays of the sun had already faded in the west, when James suddenly felt Richard shiver and tremble from head to foot.

"What is it?" he asked, anxiously.

"Oh, I am so cold, and I feel so strange. James, I quite forgot that papa told me never to stay out after the sun was gone down. I'm afraid he will be so angry. Do let us go back quickly."

Much as James tried he could not get back, with Richard in his arms, as quickly as he had come with him on his shoulders. The ground sloped up, too, instead of down, and it was much harder work. Still he never,

stopped, till panting and breathless he reached the dining-room door. M. Lassalles, who had become uneasy about Richard, had seen the two coming, and was prepared to blame the boys for being so thoughtless; but the words were checked on his lips, as on going up to Richard he saw that he had fainted, and was lying utterly powerless in James's arms.

CHAPTER V.

THE dampness of the autumn evening air, and the exhalations of the marshy meadows had seized the poor delicate child, and for two or three days he lay very ill. As soon as he recovered consciousness he asked for James, and begged to have him with him. James must give him his medicines, and no one but James could amuse him. M. Lassalles made no objection to the boy's presence, and from that time he never left Richard's room. Mademoiselle Leblois and Juliet were amazed at Richard's fancy for a little beggar-boy, and did not at all approve of his being allowed to take the place of one of the members of the family by the sick-bed. They had, indeed, no forwardness on James's part to complain of, for whenever

they went into the room he retired directly to the farthest corner; but if Richard noticed it he always called him back. The poor child still suffered much, and no one ventured to oppose his wishes.

Had the lookers on been kindly disposed, or even simply just to James, they must have remarked the self-forgetfulness, presence of mind, gentleness, and patience, which made him such a pleasant nurse and companion to the little invalid. But they were too much prejudiced to be just. No one but M. Lassalles noticed all this, and he said nothing.

One day Richard, on arousing from a heavy doze, looked long and steadily at James, who was sitting at the foot of the bed, and did not know his little patient was awake.

"How good you are to me," Richard said, suddenly. "I do love you."

"I do not see why you should call me good," replied James; "but if I know how to do any thing right I owe it to my mother. She taught me to love God, and to do as I would be done by."

"Do you really love God?" asked Richard; "you can't know much about Him."

"I can see His good hand all around me," James answered; "and then when my mother was alive, I

saw how gentle, and patient and good she was; and I knew it was God who put it into her heart. When I feel sad and lonely it makes me happier to think of God, who loves us so well, and is never far away from us."

The two boys spent much time talking in this way in the bed-room. Very different scenes meanwhile were passing below. Robert had hardly troubled to come to see his sick brother even once a day, and had shown not the slightest care or concern about him. The only companion he cared for was his father's new groom. M. Lassalles had repeatedly told him how much he disapproved of this intimacy, but Robert paid no attention to his words, and had even rudely answered one day that he should be bored to death at home if it were not for Philip's company.

He became daily more insolent, coarse, and sullen in his behaviour to his own family. The groom kept him in a state of perpetual irritation by telling him of the horses and the meets of the last young master he had lived with, who was not older than Robert, but had his own guns, dogs, and horses. Robert felt himself aggrieved, and treated like a child, because he had only his old pony to ride. His ill-humour fell

principally on James, to whom he gave an insolent word whenever he was out of his father's hearing.

"What a pity it is, Master Robert," said Philip, "that your father won't let you hunt. Not many young gentlemen of your age are so obedient as you. M. Arthur wouldn't have submitted to be kept like a caged bird with his wings clipped, I know."

"I have told you often enough, Philip," Robert replied, pettishly, "that my father saw a dreadful accident happen to one of his brothers when he was young, and out hunting; and ever since then he cannot bear the name of field sports."

"But that's no reason why you shouldn't go shooting, Master Robert. If we had a gun we might set off together, and nobody be any the wiser."

"Ah, if I only had a gun!" sighed Robert.

"I saw a splendid one the other day—such a bargain. You give me a hundred francs and I'll get it for you this very night," said Philip.

"A hundred francs! but I haven't got them. I have only twenty left in my purse."

"Ask your father. He is rich enough to let you have as much as you want."

Such conversations passed repeatedly till the wish to possess the splendid gun took such hold of Robert

that he could think of nothing else. Such a desire becomes a terrible temptation to an ill-regulated mind like Robert's. He had no strength better than his own to keep him from evil—for he never prayed, and the thought of God had no place in his heart.

One day Richard having passed a bad night fell asleep in the afternoon, and his faithful attendant worn out too, dropped off himself, with his head resting on the foot of the bed. While they were both sleeping, Robert came into the room to see if he had left his knife there the evening before. His eye fell at once upon a bank-note lying on the table. It was for one hundred francs. Just the price of the gun! Who would be the wiser if he took it? Richard's little pale face lay motionless on the pillow. James's head was buried in the counterpane; both were breathing heavily. The temptation was strong. Robert caught up the note, slipped it into his pocket, and trembling all over, glided out of the room on tip-toe lest the slightest sound should awake one of the sleepers. He had reached the door, and was just turning to shut it, when he started to see James's eyes fixed upon him with a steady searching gaze. Had he been seen? Would he be suspected? Oh, how he detested

that boy who had been acting the spy, perhaps, and would betray him.

The links which form the heavy chain of sin are quickly forged. The thought that the suspicion of the theft might easily be made to fall on James himself flashed into Robert's mind, and he welcomed it.

A few moments after M. Lassalles came into the room. Richard had just awoke.

"Did I not leave a bank-note here?" M. Lassalles asked. "I think it must have fallen out of my pocket-book when I opened it. If it is not here I do not know where to look."

"Oh yes, papa," said Richard; "we found it a moment after you were gone out, and put it here on the table for you. James, where is it?"

But James was looking in vain. The bank-note was not where they had put it. He could not help recalling Robert's startled look as he had suddenly woke up, and seen him leaving the room.

"Has anyone been in since I was here?" asked M. Lassalles.

"No, papa, nobody."

James did not contradict the words. How could he throw suspicion on the son of his benefactor? And then he really could not believe Robert would

be capable of such an act. The bank-note would certainly be found. He went on seeking. M. Lassalles watched him with a troubled countenance. But the search was utterly vain; the bank-note was gone beyond a doubt. M. Lassalles, fearing to agitate the little invalid, left the room without a word. A few minutes after James was sent for, and did not come back.

It was not a mere suspicion which rested upon the poor lad. M. Lassalles thought his guilt was clear. It cost him much to renounce the trust he had placed in the honest open countenance of the orphan boy. But who has not been deceived by appearances? How often does vice put on the garb of virtue!

"Anselm was right," said M. Lassalles to himself, as he walked slowly towards the gardener's cottage; "I was very imprudent in taking such a boy into the house, and allowing him to be friendly with my son. How difficult it is to act wisely."

James had gone up to the little room he used to occupy before he became Richard's companion. Anselm, contrary to custom, was standing at the door of his cottage, with his hands behind him, and a very grave look on his face.

"You know what has happened, Anselm," said his master."

"I know what is said," replied the gardener, gloomily.

"And you do not believe it?" asked M. Lassalles, in a surprised tone. "Why you always thought badly of the boy."

"Sir," said the old man, with the calmness given by strong conviction, "I know that boy well now, and I am certain he is not guilty."

After leaving Anselm, M. Lassalles returned to Richard's room. He found him weeping bitterly, and deaf to all the arguments of his sister and her governess.

"It is a wicked shame!" he repeated again and again. "Why not accuse me? I was in the room as well as James."

"It is very painful to me to accuse James," said M. Lassalles, "but you must understand that I should still less think of suspecting my own son. Beside, my poor child, do you want us to suppose that you got up out of your bed to hide the note, when we know you cannot stand? No, my little man, you cannot take it upon yourself."

Richard buried his face in the clothes and sobbed.

"He loved me so, and was so kind to me, and did everything for me, and now this is how they treat him. Oh, James! James! If I could only tell him that I know he did not do it."

Two days passed away, and Robert, whom no one suspected, was certainly the most miserable of all. He had not had a moment's peace since he had touched the fatal note. He had locked it up in a drawer and carried the key always in his pocket, but it seemed to burn him every time he felt it was there. Twenty times he was on the point of secretly putting the note back in his father's desk, but he dared not. How could it be explained? Oh, if he had only known what wretchedness that sin would cost him.

As he was walking alone in the park one evening, anxious to avoid everybody's eyes, and yet half frightened to be alone, feeling an Eye upon him all the while which he could not escape, and which read him through and through, he suddenly found himself face to face with James.

"What do you want here?" said Robert, who trembled violently when he saw him. James was very pale and hollow-eyed; it was plain that he had been suffering terribly.

"Mr. Robert," he said, "tell the truth to your father. Do, I implore you! You know you cannot hide it from God, and you cannot forgive yourself."

"What do you mean?" said Robert, passionately. "Leave me alone. I don't know what you want with me."

"Yes, you do know. But perhaps you do not understand all the harm you are doing me in letting me be suspected of this theft. I have stayed here till now, because I hoped you would speak. I never thought you could—— But to-morrow I shall go."

His courage broke down as he said these words, and with a voice broken by sobs, he added—"I shall go, and they will think me guilty. Even Richard will think so. Oh God, what shall I do?"

Through the whole night after this conversation, Robert could not sleep a wink. He had always before him James's white face and reproachful look. He kept hearing the heart-broken tone of his last words.

"I cannot hide it from God," he said to himself, "and I cannot forgive myself. It is true, it is true;" and he found not a moment's peace till he had taken the firm resolve to go to his father as soon as it was

day, and confess all. We will not describe what followed that confession. It was an hour never to be forgotten in Robert's life, when, humbled and penitent as he was, he heard his father tell him that he loved him still, and had more hope of him now than he had had for many a day.

How shall we describe either, the meeting between Richard and James? James had already packed up his little bundle and was just about to start, when he was sent for to M. Lassalles. His master gave him a strong grasp of the hand, and then led him to Richard's bedside.

"I never believed it for one instant," whispered Richard, as in an ecstasy of delight he clasped his arms round James's neck.

Presently Robert came in. He looked very pale, and did not lift his eyes to James's face as he held out his hand and asked him in a scarcely audible voice to forgive him the wrong he had done. James seized the offered hand, and pressed it between his own which, trembled with joy, while his eyes were full of tears. From that moment the proud young master and the honest serving lad were trusty friends.

It was decided that James should go on working

under Anselm's orders, but at the same time he was to spend some hours each day under Richard's teaching. Thus his two great desires were fulfilled; he learned the mystery of books, and at the same time he proved the higher joy of loving and being beloved.

Mary's First Lesson in the Law of Love.

IT was a lovely country lane, with mossy banks and hedges full of wild roses, which led little Mary from school to her mother's house. And yet to-day, instead of tripping gaily along as she generally did, she was walking slowly, with her head bent down, not looking at the flowers, nor listening to the sweet carols of the birds she loved so much. Any one who had met her would have thought she had been getting into trouble at school, and was afraid to meet her mother, lest she should be questioned. But it was not so: her schoolmistress had had no fault to find, and had even sent her away with some kind words of praise and encouragement. What was she thinking about so seriously, then? What had brought that grave

look, which did not seem to belong to her childish face? If we want to know, we must go back to the very beginning of the morning.

Little Mary had left her mother at nine o'clock as cheerfully as usual, carrying with her to school the little basket which contained her dinner. She had run singing along this same path, which she is now treading with such lingering steps. The country had never looked so fresh and beautiful to her as on this spring morning, and she had never felt more full of life and glee.

Her schoolmistress was a person who really loved the children who were entrusted to her care; and she used to begin school every morning by reading a few verses from the Bible, and explaining their meaning. She tried day by day to fix in their young hearts some precept or principle of Divine love which might guide them and help them to resist evil while they were still children, and which, when they were grown up, and had entered on a life full of greater difficulties and harder duties, might come back to their memories, and make them strong and brave women.

On the evening before the day we are speaking about, she had noticed several little acts of selfishness

among the children of the school; so she had chosen as the verses for this day some words which went right home to little Mary's heart: "Look not every one on your own things, but every one also on the things of others;" and, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." "Can these words be meant for me?" said Mary to herself; "what can I do, who am so little and so ignorant? I have nothing to give anybody, but everything to receive. What can I do for other people? I can't help anybody; I want everybody to help me."

It was these things Mary was thinking about so gravely as she walked home; and she was so taken up with her own thoughts, that she did not even see her mother was coming to meet her, till she heard her voice saying—

"Why, my child, what is the matter with you? You don't look a bit like my own bright, merry singing-bird. Have you been in trouble at school to-day?"

"No, mother, not that, but . . ." And after a little pause, she told her mother all that was on her mind.

"Why, did you really think, my Mary, that you

were too young to try and do something for others? Don't you often help me about the house in the mornings before you go to school? and when you dress your little brother, are you not working for others then?"

"Oh, mother, that can't be what it means; it is so easy to do anything for those you love. What I do for you doesn't cost me any trouble at all. But then, you know, I have nothing to give, mother; I have to come to you for everything."

"Do you think we have nothing to give, then, Mary, except money or food or clothing? We can give time and kind words to those who are suffering, and love to everybody. If we have love in our hearts, it is a treasure that is never spent, and we can keep on giving and giving as long as we like."

"Oh, mother, do tell me how to do something for other people, please. I should like to try and begin to-morrow."

"I really hardly know how to tell you just what to do. There is scarcely any limit to what we might do for others, more than we do, if we only asked God to give us the heart to watch for every opportunity of serving or giving pleasure to those around us. What we want is just to be able to forget our-

selves. When we are taken up with ourselves, our own enjoyment or wishes, we are blind to the wants and wishes of others. But when we have love in our hearts, it opens our eyes, and we are astonished to find how many little opportunities come for showing kindness. I am very glad you have begun to think about this, my child; but you need not puzzle your little head about it any more; only try to practise what I have said, and you will soon find out how easy and how sweet it is even for a little girl to 'show loving kindness.'"

That night Mary said at the end of her prayer, "O Lord, teach me not to think about myself, and to do something for others."

The next morning she woke with quite a light, happy heart again. She had not forgotten the lesson of the day before, but she meant to try and *do* something instead of just thinking about it, and that made her glad. She helped her mother, just as she always did, till it was time to go to school; then, after a warm good-bye kiss, she tripped away with her little basket on her arm.

As she came to the corner of the lane, where there was a clump of large trees, she heard, quite close to her, some feeble plaintive cries, which filled her with

pity. She looked about till she found a poor little bird lying on the grass. It was scarcely fledged, and seemed too weak or frightened either to hop or fly. Very likely, too, it was hurt. Mary knew in a minute what had happened. The little one had been too bold, had got on to the edge of the nest in its mother's absence, and then had suffered for its rashness and daring by falling over. She took it up, and caressed it very gently, but it still went on making its pitiful little cries. Mary looked up, and saw, on a bough not much above her reach, a little mossy nest, which she had no doubt was the young bird's home. She could climb like a squirrel; so down she put her basket on the ground, and pulled herself up as well as she could by the rough, knotty bark, till she could reach the nest. Then she laid the little trembling thing very gently on the soft down bed its mother had made for it. There were three other young ones in the nest, all opening their beaks very wide, as if they did not know exactly whether to be frightened or rejoiced to see their lost brother brought back again in such a way.

"Oh, how glad I am I found it!" thought Mary, catching up her basket, and running along to make up for lost time; "the poor mother will never guess,

when she comes back, what danger one of her little ones has been in, unless, indeed, it knows how to tell her. I don't know if this can be called exactly doing anything for other people, but I am very glad I was able to save the bird any more pain and fright."

Nothing else happened to Mary on her way to school. When her teacher came in, Mary saw that she looked very pale and tired; this made her sorry, for she loved her teacher very much. Mary was sitting beside a girl named Fanny, who was one of the cleverest girls in the school, but who gave her mistress a good deal of trouble by being impertinent sometimes. This day she had not taken the trouble to learn her lessons at all. When she went up to say them, she had to be sent back again, and the teacher was obliged gently to reprove her. Fanny, never liking to be found fault with, however much she deserved it, was about to make a rude reply, when Mary, who saw the storm gathering on her face, bent down and whispered—

"Just see how pale and ill teacher looks to-day!"

Fanny was not a hard-hearted girl. She could see now that there was something the matter, as Mary said; so she checked the words she had been going

to speak, and began to learn her lesson in silence. The teacher noticed what had passed, and felt grateful to the child for conquering herself, and to Mary for the little word spoken in season.

In the play-hour, Mary saw one of her school-fellows sitting quite by herself, instead of joining in the games.

"What is the matter to-day, Rose?" she said; "don't you want to play?"

"No, not to-day," Rose said; "I am too hungry. Mother had no more bread in the house when I came away; so she could not give me any."

"There, then," said Mary; "take this; I had such a good breakfast that I shall not be hungry." And she put into Rose's hand the piece of bread and nice ripe apple her mother had packed into her basket.

Rose did not like to take it at first, but a glance at Mary's face made her feel she might; and Mary felt much more happy in seeing her eat it than she would have done in eating it herself.

On her way home from school, she passed an old man sitting on the stump of a tree. He had put down his bundle beside him, and looked as if he would never find strength and courage to take it

"MARY'S FIRST LESSON IN THE LAW OF LOVE."
Mary carries the old man's burden.—*Page 217.*

up again and get on to the village that night. Mary noticed him as she passed, but did not speak at first, because she was rather afraid of strangers; but second thoughts made her braver. He looked so worn and weary, that she went back to him, and said, timidly—

"You are very tired, and it is a long way yet to the village. If you will come with me to my mother's, I am sure she will give you a rest, and something to eat before you go on."

"God bless your kind little heart! I don't know what I should have done if you hadn't come by, for my poor old legs fail me so, I am afraid of falling every step I take; and I have come a long way to-day."

As he said this, he pulled himself up with difficulty, and was going to pick up his bundle, but Mary had got hold of that already, and carried it for him all the way, walking slowly by his side. He told her how he had come so far to get to the house of his son, who lived a few miles further on, and with whom he wanted to end his days.

Mary's mother received the old man with all kindness, made him up a little bed by the fire for that night, and got him a lift in a cart the next

morning. He went away, leaving blessings behind on little Mary and her mother.

Such was the story of the first day in which Mary tried to forget herself, and live for others. Her mother did not ask her how she had kept her good resolution; she did not want Mary to think too much or speak of what she had done; she could tell by her bright eyes and cheerful voice that she was happy, and the rest had better be a secret between her own heart and God.

Is there one child among those who read this little story, even the very youngest, who cannot learn in the same way to do something for others? I think not; for it is not great things we have to try and do, but only to love and do to others as we should like them to do to us.

Anna's Birthday;

OR,

"IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE."

LITTLE Anna was sitting one day by the drawing-room window, looking out impatiently for her mother's return. It was a bitter afternoon in the month of February; the wind blew in great gusts, and moaned in the chimneys; the streets were almost deserted. It was slippery under foot, and stormy overhead, and scarcely anyone had courage to venture out, unless under some very pressing necessity. Here and there a shivering, thinly-clad passer-by was to be seen, with red nose and blue lips, but Anna did not notice them enough even to pity them. She had been home some time from school, and was wondering what could have become of her mamma, who seldom left her such a long time alone in the afternoon. At last a bright thought darted into Anna's mind.

"Yes, yes; that must be it," she exclaimed to herself, clapping her hands. "To-morrow is my birthday, and mamma has gone out to buy me a present. Oh, how I should like to know what she has chosen! I wonder if she will think of buying me a doll—that is what I want. My doll is not half so pretty as the dolls of the other little girls I know. Or a new story-book I should like almost as well. I have read all mine over and over again; and it is tiresome always to know what is coming next in a story. Or a box of paints and a picture-book would do. Or a new hat, perhaps," she said, looking at her own, which she had thrown on a chair; "mine is very old. But no, I should like something to amuse myself with better than a hat. Whatever has mamma chosen, I wonder!"

This idea having once entered Anna's little head, grew and grew, and took all manner of shapes, till in ten minutes I scarcely know what she had not thought of, and it seemed to her that she must have been waiting and watching at least an hour. At last the door-bell rang, and she rushed down-stairs into the hall. It was her mother, with a parcel in her hand, which she immediately gave to nurse, telling her to take it into her room. Anna, delighted to see

that she had been right in her guess as to what her mamma had gone out for, threw her arms round her mother's neck and covered her face with kisses. Madame Belmont soon came into the drawing-room; Anna brought her stool close to her mother's chair by the fire, and began reading aloud a chapter of natural history about ants. But all the while she was reading, instead of thinking about the industrious little creatures, Anna's mind was full of visions of elegantly dressed dolls, and little dolls' cradles, with muslin curtains, and all sorts of other charming things she had seen in the shop windows, so that she had scarcely a thought left for the ants, though at any other time she would have been delighted with their curious habits, and the wonderful skill and forethought they display.

All night her dreams were full of the same images. She woke up several times, and was quite disappointed to find that it was still dark, not even a little grey streak showing yet through the window blinds, and that the only thing to be done to pass away the time was to go to sleep again.

At last the daylight came: Anna was wide awake at once, and her nurse came into the room.

"Nurse, do you know I am eight years old to-day?"

said the little girl, as she was being dressed? "I shall soon be a woman, shall I not? You won't be able to scold me much longer, as you do sometimes. Oh, I am glad I am eight years old now! But, tell me, what did mamma bring home yesterday in that parcel she gave you? Did you open it? Was it something pretty?"

Nurse replied with a smile, that she must not ask such questions; and as soon as Anna was dressed, she ran to her mamma's room, who gave her a very sweet and loving birthday kiss.

The birthday was to be kept in the evening; several of Anna's little friends were invited. What a very long time it would seem before evening! But presently Anna's grandmother woke up, and rang for some one to bring her breakfast. Anna thought she was quite big enough now to carry up the tray, with the cup of chocolate, to the bedroom. She knew that this was the time her grandmother generally chose for giving her presents.

Anna placed the tray safely on the little table by the bedside; then she kissed her grandmother, and asked her if she had had a good night. Then, instead of going down-stairs again, Anna stood still as if there was something more to come.

Her grandmother smiled. "What is it, Anna?" she said; "you seem to be waiting for something. Do you want to take the tray down again? It is very kind of you, my love, but I like to be a long while over my breakfast."

Anna's face fell a little. "I thought——" she began; "but I will go down, grandmamma, if you wish me to go."

She took a few steps slowly in direction of the door, then, turning round again, she said, "Do you know, grandmamma, that to-day is the 9th of February?"

"So the grand secret has slipped out at last," said her grandmother, laughing. "That was all I was waiting for, darling. Yes, I do remember it is the 9th of February. It is a day which made me very happy, and brought me a present for which I do not forget to thank God. I have been asking Him already this morning to bless you, my child. Be happy yourself, and make those who love you, happy. I will not keep you in expectation any longer. My present is not a very pretty one to look at, but it can soon be turned into something pretty. You know that I cannot go out now, so as I could not choose anything for you myself, I thought you should make your own

choice, and I would give you the money. See, here is a ten-franc piece (8s. 4d.), and you can go this afternoon, with mamma or nurse, to buy anything you like, to put with your other presents to-night."

Anna took the little new, shining gold piece in her hand, and then, throwing her arms round her grandmother's neck, exclaimed, "What, all this for me! I never was so rich in my life. How good you are, dear grandmamma."

"I am very glad you are so pleased, darling; and I think my pleasure is even greater than yours, for 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

The little girl kissed her grandmother again and again, and then ran down-stairs to show her treasure to her mamma. She almost fancied she was already carrying in her arms the lovely doll she meant to buy with the money.

"'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' grandmamma said," she thought to herself. "Well, I know it is nice to give, but I do not think anything could make me more happy than I am now, with this beautiful gold piece to spend just as I like."

In the afternoon, Anna went out with her nurse to make the purchase. It was a fine frosty afternoon; the streets were full of people, and carriages were

driving about in all directions, but Anna had eyes for nothing but the toy-shop windows. They had walked a good way without passing any which she thought quite tempting enough to enter; she was so afraid of being led into buying something less beautiful than the doll she had seen in her sleeping and waking dreams.

"But we shall never choose at all, if you are so hard to please," said her nurse; "and you know we were to be back in good time."

But Anna was not to be persuaded. "You know, nurse, it is a very important thing to choose a doll," she answered. "If I were to take the first I see, I should be sure to be sorry for it directly after."

At length they came to a very large shop, in the window of which was displayed a charming doll—a baby in long white robes and a little hood. It was not a very large doll, but its face was so fresh and pretty, with eyes so blue, looking out wonderingly from under long lashes, that Anna's heart was captivated at once, and she stood still in speechless admiration before it. "How exquisite!" she exclaimed at last, almost under her breath.

Just as she spoke, a poor woman stopped close to her, carrying a little baby blue with cold in her arms, and with a little girl by her side most scantily and

thinly clad. Anna could not help noticing them. The mother's face was so white and careworn as she tried to hush the baby's wailing, and the little girl, just Anna's own size, had such a pinched, hungry look.

"Are they very poor and hungry, nurse, do you think?" Anna whispered.

"Yes, I am afraid they are," nurse answered. "I do not expect they have had any dinner to-day, and perhaps have no fire either."

Anna thrust her hand into her pocket to see if she had any coppers there, but there was nothing at all but her ten-franc piece. What should she do? She would go into the shop and get change.

"Stop here a minute till I come back," she said to the little girl as she opened the shop door; and the poor woman with her children crept close to the porch so as to be out of the wind, while they waited for the return of the kind young lady.

The shop was full of people. All sorts of toys were being taken down and unpacked and displayed, and then put back again, for the purchasers seemed to want to see everything before they would make their choice. Anna saw it was of no use for her to try and get her change directly, so while she was waiting, her

eyes fixed again on the lovely doll, which looked only more charming on a nearer view. At last someone came to ask her what she wished, and she inquired the price of the doll.

"Ten francs, mademoiselle," replied the man. "It is not at all dear for a doll of the kind. See how beautifully it is made, how well finished, and what a pretty baby-face it has."

Anna still hesitated, but she was on the point of yielding.

"Ten francs!" she said, "and I have only just that in my purse."

A sudden idea struck her, which she hoped would put things straight.

"Nurse, haven't you any money?"

"No, Miss Anna, I did not bring my purse."

"Dear, dear, what a pity!" said Anna; "if the doll only cost nine francs and a half it would be all right. How tiresome that it is just ten francs!"

"If you think it is too dear, mademoiselle, here is one that costs only eight francs."

Anna looked at the eight-franc doll, but oh, what a difference! It was dressed like a lady, not like a baby, and she could not bear its straw hat and red ribbon streamers. No, no; it was impossible to buy

that after seeing the other. Oh, what hard hearts even children have when they begin to think only of themselves! Anna cast one more glance at the poor woman with her children, whom she could still see through the glass door, then a final look at the fair dolly decided her. She took it, and put her ten-franc piece into the shopman's hand. She passed out of the shop very quickly, not daring to turn her head so as to see the tears gathering in the child's eyes and the poor mother's look of pain. She dared not even say: "I am sorry I have nothing to give you." How could she say so, while they could see her carrying away the elegant doll in her arms, that must have cost so much money?

Anna walked home in silence by her nurse's side; her head hung down, and even the sight of her precious doll—her very own now—could not make her feel happy and light-hearted. She could not forget how selfish she had been, and she felt ready to cry all the time. When she got home, her mother and grandmother admired her doll and praised her choice, but her face did not brighten. All her little friends were loud in their praises of the new baby. Anna had more presents, and the whole evening was spent in games, but she was not merry,—there was a

weight on her heart. When the children were all gone, and Anna was in bed, her mother came to look at her as she did every evening. She was surprised, as soon as she opened the door, to hear Anna sobbing.

"What is the matter, darling? You have been quiet and sad all the evening. Are you ill?"

"No, dear mamma, I am not ill, but I am very unhappy. I have been so wicked, so cruel, so selfish. Oh, mamma, that little girl was so hungry and so cold. Nurse said she didn't think she or her mother or the baby had anything to eat, and perhaps they are dead of hunger all from my fault."

Madame Belmont could not make any sense out of Anna's words, all broken by sobs and tears, till the child calmed herself enough to tell her mother the whole story, and then Madame Belmont looked very sad too.

"You did very wrong, Anna," she said, as the child hid her face on her mother's shoulder. "You let others suffer rather than deny yourself a pleasure. You have sinned against God, for it was He who spoke to you through your conscience, and you would not listen. How cruelly you acted too! Just think what that poor woman and the little girl must have felt when they saw you go away without even looking

at them, and knew you had been buying a plaything which must have cost more money than would have fed them for days. What bitter things she must have said in her heart about you, unless God has given her grace to bear and suffer patiently, and to forgive those who act unkindly to her. If those poor people have been suffering very much on this day, which was to have been such a happy one to you, it is your fault."

Anna was again sobbing bitterly.

"Oh, mamma! if I could only give that money to the poor woman now, I would give up my doll in a moment; but the shopman would not take it back. Mamma," she said, suddenly lifting her head, "would you take the doll away from me, and let me have the money instead?"

"Yes, my child, I will certainly, if you wish it; but you do not know where the poor woman lives, and it is very doubtful if you would be able to find her."

"Ah, that's true, I didn't think of that. Oh dear! what shall I do? But, mamma, I would rather any way you took away the doll. I shall never like it again. Whenever I begin to play with it, I shall think of the poor little girl and her mother."

"Well, it shall be as you wish. Possibly we may be able, if we try, to find out who the poor woman is,

and to help her after all. And it is perhaps just as well for you, Anna, that you cannot repair your fault immediately. We are very apt to forget wrong things we have done, if they do not have any serious consequences. But when we cannot do anything to repair the wrong, it makes a deeper impression on our hearts, and we are more careful not to fall into the same fault again."

The next morning the pretty doll was locked up in Madame Belmont's wardrobe, and Anna received another ten-franc piece. She used to ask nurse every day to take the same walk to the shop, hoping they might meet the poor woman and her children again; but they never saw them, and Anna had almost given up hope, when one day, while walking with her mother, she caught sight of them at the corner of the street. The children were with their mother again, and they all looked just as wan and hungry as before. Anna led her mother up to them, and then shrank behind to hide herself; she was afraid the little girl would remember her and expect to be deceived again. She did not know how many troubles and disappointments the poor child had to bear every day, or she would not have supposed she would think so much of one.

Madame Belmont spoke very kindly to the mother and asked her all about her home and her family. She was a widow, and not able to do work enough to support her two children, so they were in very great poverty. Madame Belmont promised to come and see her, and she kept her word. After a little time she took a more comfortable room for the family in a healthier part of the city, and persuaded a few kind ladies to join in raising a little sum weekly for their support. It was Anna's great pleasure to go with her mother to see the poor woman, and she was delighted when she found that some of the frocks which she had just outgrown would fit the little girl. Often at home, too, she would spend many of her play-hours in making nice warm clothes for both the children; and when she had the joy of taking them, and saw the beaming looks with which they were received, she quite understood the meaning and the truth of the words: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

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